THE COMING OF THE KING

BERNIE BABCOCK

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By

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THE SOUL OF ANN RUTLEDGE, ETC.

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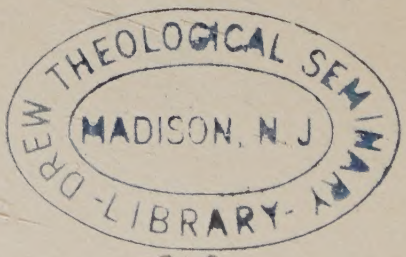

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To
THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND

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A. D. 32

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PROLOGUE

THE CHILD

"THE fangs of the she-wolf are whetted keen for Galilean flesh and else the wrath of Jehovah palsy the arm of Rome, Galilean soil will run red with blood from scourged backs ere the noon of a new day."

The speaker, a slender woman wearing the garb of a peasant, lowered a water-jar from her shoulder and stood beside the bench of a workman, who paused at his task to get news from the market place.

"The souls for the cross—are they many?" he asked.

"A score of hundred I hear whispered, but at market place and fountain the spear of the soldier presseth hard against the ribs of those who congregate to exchange a word."

The man, who was fashioning a heavy yoke, lifted his bearded face to that of the woman. "A score of hundred!" he exclaimed. "To-morrow's sun will climb over Tabor to the ring of axes cutting green timber for twenty hundred crosses! The mercy of God on the victims!"

"Yea—and to-morrow's sun will set with the breeze of evening wafting one great groan of agony over the hills and vales of Galilee—one great sob of lamentation—one great curse on the barbarians of the city on the Tiber. And this for no crime save that of poverty!"

"Insurrection," the man corrected. "The Gaulonite raised, not a popular revolt, alas. It is but *insurrection.*"

"Insurrection!—and why not insurrection? The Gaulonite may hang on a cross until the black winged ravens pick his bones and wild dogs carry them to desert places, but the Gaulonite speaks the voice of our fathers for verily, verily, the soil of the earth belongs to God, not men, and the toiler should eat of the increase of his labor! Doth not our toil yield the barley harvest, yet are we not ofttimes hungry? Doth not our toil make the vine hang heavy in the vineyard, yet do not our bottles droop empty of wine? Doth not the substance of our bitter toiling go to the tax-gatherer? Aye, Joseph, thou knowest I speak truly. It is tax—tax—tax,—land tax, temple tax, poll tax, army tax, court tax—

always tax; and when there is to be a great orgy in the banquet halls of Rome, or Herod is to give a mighty feast for that brazen harlot, his brother's wife, are we not reduced to the bran and vinegar fare of slaves to pay the cost? A curse on Rome! A curse on Herod!"

"Hist, Mary, hist! Know'st thou not there may be ears listening even now behind the pomegranate?"

The woman glanced nervously toward the door where a leather curtain hung. She crossed the room, lifted the curtain and looked out into the court. It was empty save for a group of children. She returned to the room and from the wall took several small skin bottles which she placed by the water-jar. Then she called, "Jesu! Jesu!"

In answer a lad of six or eight years appeared from the court.

"Fill the bottles and hang them under the vine where the night breeze will cool them for the morrow."

When the child had done her bidding he stepped to the door. "Mother," he said, "hear thou? There is weeping in the home of Jael's father! Listen! Hear thou—the children calling—calling?"

The woman went to the door. She listened a moment and as the wail of a child sounded over the court she said, "Aye, sore weeping. Why, Jesu?"

"Jael's father went away yester morning and

hath not come again. A man saw him with many others driven in chains like cattle. A stain of blood was on his face—and he will not come again. Why did the soldiers take Jael's father?"

"Hist, child. Talk not of Jael's father. Run and play."

* * * * * *

The next morning before the rising sun had climbed above Mount Tabor, little Jesu with his peasant mother left Nazareth, carrying between them a new-made yoke. They had not yet reached the end of the footpath around the slope of the hill to the highway, when they heard a heart-sickening moan.

The child stopped suddenly saying, "Something doth suffer?"

The woman took a few steps forward and looked out into the roadway. Then she too stopped, and with a sharp cry threw her hand across her eyes. Having received no answer to his inquiry the child pushed past her to the highroad. Then he too gave a cry, half fear, half pain, saying, "It is the father of Jael—and, mother—*mother*—there is a *dog.*" And with a scream he dashed into the roadway. As he did so an animal slunk across his path and disappeared behind a cactus thicket hedging a barley field.

The moan gave way to a feeble call as the child appeared. "Jesu! Jesu, I thirst!" were the words the parched lips uttered.

Helpless, the man hung crucified. The cross was not more than four feet high, all in this wholesale crucifixion being purposely low that wild dogs and jackals might tear the vitals, the bodies thus exposed emphasizing the power and cruelty of Rome. Naked the crucified one hung, his palms clotted with blood where spikes held them on the green cross-beam, and the wood behind the body stained dark from thong-cuts on the back. His legs lay on the ground. Flies swarmed wherever there was blood and the gray face of the victim was yet grayer from dust cast up by travelers on the roadway.

"Jesu! Jesu! Water for my burning tongue!" the man moaned.

"Give him to drink," the woman said in low tones to the child, who stood before the cross, his large dark eyes fixed on the helpless one in horror and in pity. "Give him water and I will watch that none spy you at the deed. Hasten!"

The child opened his water-bottle and held it toward the lips of the man. Pinioned hands, stiffened shoulders and weakened muscles made the effort to drink difficult. Pulling his kerchief from his neck, the child sopped it with water and held it to the dry lips.

In wavering tones the man, refreshed, said, "Since yester noon have I hung here. With the morning came the dog; thrice came he sniffing.

Once, before weakness overcame me, with kicking and fierce screams I frightened the brute. Again, a herdsman drove him far across the field. And now you come, Jesu. Ah, that you might tarry until the numbness creeping over my back where the flies swarm, and into my hands that have burned, reached my brain, that you might stay until the darkness of death hides from me the skulking form waiting to rend my flesh."

"Woman," said the child, raising his dark eyes to his mother's face, "dost fear to leave me?"

"Yea, my little one, lest seeing thee minister to a malefactor some spy or guard might take thee."

"And would they take one young like me, who never did Rome harm?"

"All do Rome harm who cry beneath her heel."

"I fear not. I can hide in the bushes and keep the evil beast away. And when the road is clear I can wet the dry lips of Jael's father."

The woman hesitated.

"Canst carry the burden alone, woman?" and there was concern in the child's voice. "The way is long, the road rough and the yoke a heavy one."

"The burden is naught save the burden of fear on my heart lest thou meet harm, my beloved one—my little Jesu!"

"Be not afraid. Will not the God of our fathers save me from the soldier's spear as once our father David was saved from the spear of Saul? Find me

but a stout club with which to keep the bristled dog from Jael's father."

Throughout the day the child kept watch over the cross and its victim by the dusty wayside. There were passers-by, most of them Galileans muttering curses on the powers that had put him on the cross, but offering no comfort to the malefactor. Twice the gaunt dog came nearer but drew back before the raised club, and with blinking eye and restless tongue, bided his time. As the sun dropped behind the trees, the moaning from the cross grew almost too faint to be heard, and when, after a long stillness, there came a sharp strange cry from the lips of the crucified, the child gave a start and then hastened to offer the wet handkerchief. But before he reached the cross the head had fallen limp over the bosom, and the feet lay quiet in the roadside dust.

The child spoke. There was no answer. He went back to his shelter in the bushes. A strange hush seemed to have fallen over the earth. With searching eyes he now watched the long road for a sight of his mother. When he turned his gaze for a moment from the roadway to the cactus hedge he noticed the watching dog had drawn closer and with fierce eagerness eyed the limp body on the cross. Fear now took possession of the child, and he moved nearer the highway and shuddered as he noticed that the dog moved nearer also.

When at last his mother came he buried his face

in her breast and sobbed: "His head hangs like a flower broken at the stem. He can not lift it, and he thirsts no more for water."

"Peace be to Jael's father," the mother replied, choking back a sob, "and peace be to thee, my brave little Jesu."

"Nay, I am not brave. I was afraid—afraid!"

"Nay, nay. My little Jesu is not afraid of a dog."

"Nay, not a dog. But after the head of Jael's father fell low, something seemed reaching out long dark arms to gather me in—in to Jael's father—and I feared."

The mother pressed the hand of the child in hers. Reassured by the warm strong clasp, he smiled as his mother said, "It were but childish fear. There is nothing by the roadside reaching dark arms out to you."

"Nay, nothing—nothing, woman," replied the child, laughing at his own fear, "nothing save the shadow of the cross."

PART ONE

A. D. 32

CHAPTER I

IN THE NET

THROUGH the open doorway and latticed window of a peasant's hut, the sunset colors of a Palestine sky glowed red. The only occupant of the room was an aged woman, thin haired and bent, who moved slowly about preparing the evening meal. She stopped beside a dingy little oven on one end of the bed platform, and bending stiffly to the floor gathered up a few handsful of stubble which she thrust into the fire. As the quick flames rose under her kettle she stirred her brew muttering: "Do not two sparrows go for a farthing and yet have we no flavor for our sop. It was not so in the days of our fathers."

Stirring and muttering she did not notice the approach of a young girl who had entered the room, until an armful of chaff was dropped by the oven. With a start she turned about.

"Sara!" she cried, "thou comest like a thief in the night. Singing doth better become thee."

"There is no song in me. Empty is my stomach,

and look you," and she pointed across the room to a pile of nets beside a wooden bench. "There are three score rents to mend and the day is done." She turned to the doorway and for a moment stood looking out, barefooted, meanly clad and unkept, yet of comely form and with abundant dark hair falling around an oval face of more than ordinary beauty. She sighed and turned back into the room.

"Thou shalt eat," and the aged woman took bread from the oven and placed it on a wooden table in the center of the room. "Sit thee down."

Sara sat down and glanced over the small table. "Bread and unseasoned sop!" she exclaimed.

"And water," cheerfully added Grandmother Rachael, as she poured the contents of a skin bottle into a pitcher.

After the washing of hands from a bowl on a stool at the table side, the aged woman muttered thanks and the evening meal began.

"It goeth down hard," Sara complained.

"But it was not so in the days of our fathers," her companion reminded her. "Then there was plenty and each man sat under his own vine and fig tree, for by the law of Moses no man was allowed to collect usury, so sayeth the Rabbi."

Hardly had the meal begun when, unnoticed by either of the women, a fisherman entered. His muscular arms were uncovered; the short skirt of his garment scarce reached his knees. His heavy dark

hair was pushed back from his forehead and the dying sunset falling over his swarthy face and neck gave him the appearance of bronze. He stopped behind Sara and spoke her name.

"It is the voice of Jael," she cried, looking back. "My Jael."

"And he hath brought a fish!" Grandmother Rachael exclaimed, laughing. "The blessing of God on thee, my son Jael. Sit thee down and sup with us."

"Thy hospitality exceedeth thy stores," he answered, "yet could I not swallow food if thy table did groan with milk and honey."

"Thou art not sick?" Sara asked, concern in her voice.

"Nay, and yet have I a fever, the consuming fever of wrath, for again hath the tax-gatherer been abroad. Robbed are our tables of fat, milk and honey; lean are our bellies for food; stripped are our bodies of covering. Yet doth the tax ever increase that Herod may add to his vast stores. It is tax—tax—tax until at night the waves of the sea beat against the shore calling 'Tax—tax,' and in the solitary places the wild dogs bark 'Tax—tax,' and in the homes of the peasant the children cry for bread while over their roofs the wind calls 'Tax—tax.'"

"It was not so in the days of our fathers," Grandmother Rachael muttered, beating her palms slowly together.

"Her heart is not without Israel's hope of the coming of the King even though her lips make much muttering," Sara said, as Jael turned to the aged woman who again wailed:

"It was not so in the days of our fathers."

"Nay, nor will it ever be so in the days of our fathers' sons," he answered her. "Was it for this that Israel was called to be God's chosen people—this—that they should toil and starve and be spit upon by heathen dogs? That they should till the soil and be robbed of the increase that Herod might buy gold platters in which to serve good Jew heads to dancing harlots? It hath been and ever will be among men struggling for bread, as among dogs fighting over a carcass that the strong shall overcome the weak. But our fathers every fifty years took back the land from the strong and gave it again to the toiler that he might have a new start. So shall it be."

While he had been speaking he had dropped the leather curtain hanging at the door. Sara lit a lamp.

"And when shall come again the days of our fathers?" Grandmother Rachael asked.

"When we rise up and wrest from the oppressor our stolen inheritance."

"Aye, but, my Jael, hast thou forgotten the Gaulonite?" Sara asked. "Did he not with two thousand followers rise up to take back the land? And were not his followers hanged on two thousand

crosses until the wild dogs of Palestine broke their fast on Jewish flesh?"

Jael had grown excited as Sara questioned him. He paced the floor. "Yea," he answered, "yea, did wild dogs feast on Jewish flesh, even the flesh of thy Jael's father! Forget not shall I until the stone of my father's tomb be rolled against my bones, how he was hung where two roads meet! Forget will I —nor forgive. And in the time of Israel's revenge will my own hands spill blood to settle the debt."

"Sh- sh- sh- " warned Sara. "Methought I saw the curtain move. Fear even now doth catch my heart in its pinching fingers."

"Fear not, my fair Sara," Jael said. "Could harm befall thee with Jael, the fisherman, nigh? Look thou at the strength of my arm and the keen edge of my tough fishing knife!" and he held forth his shining blade.

"Not for myself do I feel fear, but for thee. Thy life would not be worth a farthing were thy fierce words heard by the dogs of Rome. Thy knife is long and keen, but the sword of the enemy is longer —and methought the curtain moved again."

"Nay, but to stay thy fears I will look."

Jael turned toward the door but had taken only a step when the leather was thrust aside and two soldiers sprang in.

"Jael! Thy strong arm! Thy knife!" Sara cried.

"Give me the knife, dog of a Jew," commanded one of the soldiers, drawing his sword. "Give me, else will I strike thy head from thy body and kick it like offal into the darkness of the night! Give me," and he held out his hand.

"Get the knife," was Jael's reply as he flung it through the uncovered door.

"By the gods! Now shalt thou come before the bar of justice to answer the charge of sedition against the mighty Cæsar and his king, thy Herod."

"Nay, no king of mine is that Idumean fox whose brother's wife doth defile his bed. Such for Rome, but not for Israel!"

"Dog of a Jew!"

"Swine of a Roman!"

For a moment the two measured glances. Then Jael was seized on each side by one of the soldiers, the first spitting in his face with the question, "Swine of a Roman am I?"

"Yea, verily—son of a she-swine," and Jael blew the contents of his mouth in the face of the soldier, who struck him across the cheek with his sword, exclaiming: "This for thy portion to-night, then the cross."

Grandmother Rachael had taken refuge on the oven step and was wringing her hands and muttering prayers, while Sara was keeping as close as possible to Jael.

"Have pity, sir," she begged of the soldier when

the cross was mentioned. "Have pity, he hath done thee no harm."

"Hold your tongue, woman," the soldier replied without looking at her, "else the cross will be thy portion also."

"And to the cross I choose to go if there my Jael goeth," she replied.

Then the second soldier, casting admiring glances on Sara, said, "She is a fair maiden; she shall be my spoil."

"Jove Almighty!" exclaimed the other, catching his sword-point in the front of her bodice and laying it open. "A fair maiden indeed. Not thine, but mine shall she be," and he motioned his fellow soldier to stand back.

"The God of our fathers strike thee dead!" Jael shouted in wrath.

"The God of thy fathers! Ha! Ha! The God of thy fathers hath no more power than yonder driveling granny. By Rome hath the God of thy fathers been smitten. To Rome belongs the maiden."

"Of all the spoil," the soldier who had discovered the beauty of Sara said to his companion, "of all the spoil that hath been taken between us, you have the larger portion. I first saw the maiden. She shall be mine!"

"Nay, mine—first mine. Then shall she be yours."

"Lord God Almighty!" Jael cried. "Is it the name of my Sara your polluted lips pass back and forth? Is it the virgin innocence of my betrothed you would trade between you? Nay!"

And with a tremendous effort he freed himself and attacked the soldiers with his naked hands. In the thick of the conflict, Sara, who had seized the lamp, went out with it to search for the knife. In the dark the struggle continued, but when Sara returned with the knife she found Jael on the floor with blood running from a wound in the head. She screamed, but no attention was paid her until her lover had been securely enmeshed in the pile of fish nets and thrown upon the wooden bench. Then the first soldier, wiping his brow and regaining his helmet, said, "Now shall I take my own?" and he moved toward Sara.

Turning the point of the fishing knife against her breast she whispered, "If thou takest me, thou takest me dead."

"'Twas I who first saw her," the second soldier protested, stepping up.

"Hold thy tongue," his companion exclaimed angrily, "else will I tie thee in the fish net with the Jew. Art thou ready to go with me?" turning toward Sara.

"Touch me not!" she commanded, drawing back.

The soldier laughed. "Touch thee not, when thou hast set my blood running like fire? Touch

thee not?" and he snatched the knife from her hand and flung it into the pile of nets, as he said, "Flame doth become thy cheek and fire thine eye! Come, nay—thou comest not? Then will Jael hang on a cross. Then will Jael's flayed back draw many stinging flies. Then will Jael's moans for water to cool his veins drained dry of blood, make sweet music. Then will the smell of Jael's flesh draw dogs with whetted fangs. Then—"

"Stop! Stay!" cried Sara. "Wilt thou spare Jael?"

"When thou art mine, then Jael shall be spared."

Sara turned to the bench. "Jael—Jael—Jael," she called, drawing her long hair across her face.

"Tangle not thy fair tresses. Soft must they lie across my cheek when thou art mine. Come," and the soldier lay hands upon her, but she shrank away and throwing herself down beside the bench cried:

"Oh, Jael—Jael—save me!"

"Come here," the first soldier called to the second, "thy sword. A live Roman is better than a dead Jew. Why wait we for the cross?"

Turning on her knees before the soldier, Sara caught the upraised sword saying, "Nay—nay—spare him."

"Wilt thou come with me?"

"Yea—God of my fathers—God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I come! But ere I leave my home forever, let me have the blessing of my mother

Rachael. Stand thou beyond the threshold lest thy presence pollute the air."

"Thou wouldst be blessed?" and the soldier laughed. "I await beyond the threshold," and pushing the other soldier in front of him, he stepped outside and stood where he could watch the pile of fish nets, from which came the sound of heavy breathing.

"My blessing," Sara whispered, *"the bitter hemlock!"*

With tears streaming down her withered cheeks while she muttered and cursed, the aged woman fastened Sara's torn bodice, binding the deadly herb within easy hand's reach.

CHAPTER II

AT TIBERIAS

A TYRIAN merchant-ship manned by three galleys of oarsmen, turned its high and proudly arched red and gold neck into the harbor of Tiberias.

After the manner of that master builder his father, Herod the Great, in building Cæsarea, Herod Antipas had built Tiberias as a home of luxury for himself and a fitting tribute to the ruling Cæsar. The great semicircular harbor reared its colossal pillars in a mighty curve flanked far out in the sea by massive towers of gray stone. On a hill rising gradually from beyond the harbor stood the royal palace of Antipas, its polished marble gleaming through the tops of palms and the lace-like green of shittah trees. Against this background of pillared stone and shining marble and living green was the shipping in the harbor. Hugged against the dock near by was a load of silver from Tarshish. Near it was a ship from Caprus bearing copper. A cargo of wine from Damascus and a cargo of linen from

Egypt rocked side by side; and a low boat piled with shells of dye fish had just come into port from the far Peloponnesus, while everywhere ships of different size and kind from those centers of commercial activity, Tyre and Sidon, were changing sails and dipping oars.

In the prow of the Tyrian merchant-ship stood Zador Ben Amon, by race and faith a Jew; by political alignment a Sadducee; by occupation an importer of precious stones, owner of a number of shops in Jerusalem where cunning work was done in gold and ivory, and a money-changer in the Temple. Zador Ben Amon was returning from a prosperous trip that had taken him as far as Rome, and having business with Herod Antipas had sent word of his visit to Tiberias. It was with a smile he stroked his perfumed beard as he caught sight of an equipage making its way to the water-front. A flock of goats and rams being driven by Arabs across the wharf, scattered, and to both right and left sailors and slaves made way for the driver of Herod's horses.

Black as ravens were the horses of Herod Antipas, and shiny as satin. Their manes and tails hung in closely curled, glossy ringlets and their heavy harness was thickly studded with polished gold buttons. The glossy black hair of Antipas was also curled, and the crown-like head-gear he wore was thickly studded with jewels, as was also the richly gold embroidered border of his robe. In his ears he

wore rings which swung down against the upper edge of his curled and greased beard.

The greeting between Antipas and the money-changer was cordial; and before they went to the palace, Zador Ben Amon was driven about the city to see the stadium, the new theatre, the streets and the underground watercourses. And he was taken to the famous hot baths a mile down the seaside, considered by Romans one of the great curiosities of the world. It was in the feast room Zador made known his business, and yet, not until some discussion of other matters had taken place, beginning with a description of a Roman banquet at which the Jew had been a guest.

"The table at which we sat was of citron wood from Mauritania, more precious than gold. And it was covered with a plateau of massive silver weighing five hundred pounds—five hundred pounds, mind you, chased and carven. Dost thou marvel that I made friends with the Romans?"

"Thou art wise, Son of Amon," Antipas answered.

"After the feast, young slave girls strewed the mosaic with sawdust dyed saffron and vermilion, mixed with sparkling powder, and naked virgins danced—*naked* virgins!"

Herod Antipas rubbed his palms and smiled, showing the tips of several sharp teeth.

"And the next day," continued the guest, "we

went to the circus and waved our ribbon-decked palms while half a score of combatants were dragged to the spoilarium and carted through the Gate of Death. A bloody sport, but they enjoy it, and gladiators are plenty. Gorgeous the shows of Rome; like the waters of the Tiber doth her wine flow, and her gold is like the stars for plenty."

"And the populace, doth it not mutter even as our own?"

"Into the feast halls comes no mention of the populace. Yet it hath been said they stand about trembling lest they starve because of the delay of an Alexandrian corn ship. But what of the populace? Whether her hordes be corn fed or not corn fed, Rome careth not. What souls have these?"

"It is the naked virgins that possess souls," and Antipas showed his pointed teeth a little more.

"Nay, it is the naked virgins that set souls on fire," Zador Ben Amon corrected.

"Rome hath not all the naked virgins that do dance. Antipas hath had a dance for his wife's sake." With this remark his sharp-toothed smile gave way to laughter.

"Which wife?" Zador asked.

"Herodias, sister of Agrippa the Great. Her Salome danced until like fire my blood chased itself into a fever. Then did I tell her to name her price. And the price was none other than the head of John —John Baptist, who for defiling the name of Anti-

pas' wife had been put in a dungeon under the castle of Machærus. Antipas is not cursed with poverty. Yet are there prices too great, for since the head of the brawler came blinking on a platter, do the people declare he were Elias, and that he is not dead but walks the dungeon by day and whither he will by night."

"Thou shouldst be a Sadducee and declare against a hereafter. They eat, drink and be merry while the Pharisees speak darkly of a hereafter of which they know nothing, and beget fear of ghosts."

"Yea, but in the hearts of the people great hope of a hereafter is ever alive. This do the Pharisees know and teach."

"The Pharisees are hypocrites. But let us to business for it meaneth more stores of gold to Antipas and Zador."

The Idumean leaned forward with his eyes on the Jew. "Speak on," he said.

"There is a reason Rome ruleth the world. She knoweth how. In the Senate are the laws made. By the sword of her vast army are they enforced. And lest insurrection be plotted against the throne of the Cæsars, Rome hath a system of spies sufficient to hear a whisper in the bowels of the earth. It hath not been so determined, but it is suspected that there is some sort of a union of toilers. Such

societies would be like a worm in the heart to our profits, Antipas."

"Fear not such worms. Some wild dream is this—that those who toil bind themselves together. Ever do cattle contend among themselves and not unite."

"It hath been done. What hath been done by slaves and men, might be done again. It hath not yet outlived the memory of man how the slaves in the Laurian silver mines arose, killed their guards, took the citadel of Sunium to sleep in, raided the armory for weapons and laid Attica waste for a great season. Nor was it because they were not well enslaved. Naked did their men and women toil under the lash. Yet they became as one man and, at the word, rose as one man. And was it not in Macedonia at the gold mines of Pangaetus that another bloody uprising took place at vast cost to the gold industry because they rose as a man? Suppose you, that the silversmiths, gold-gilders, pearl and ivory and filigree workers should secretly band themselves together, hast thou knowledge to compute the loss to my profit?"

Herod Antipas had covered his sharp teeth with his lip and was listening intently to Zador Ben Amon.

"Would it mean naught to thee if in thine own province thy hewers of stone and builders of ships, thy tent-makers and herdsmen and corn growers should secretly unite and rise against thee?"

"Thy words sink deep," Antipas said, taking up his cup. Finding it empty, he looked behind him. The stewart who had been standing there had gone out. "More wine!" Antipas shouted. "And keep thee by the cups," he gave order as the stewart came hastily in. Antipas and his guest drank freely. Then the Jew spoke again.

"Here is Herod Antipas," he said, holding up his left hand and marking its first finger with the stubby forefinger of his right hand. "And here is Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and here is the High Priest of the House of Annas. And the three have much gold. But between them hath Annas the greater portion. From the tax on all the world getteth Pilate his. From Galilean tax getteth Antipas his, but from the Temple getteth Annas his through the hands of Caiaphas. The tribute money from all the earth, the Sanctuary half shekel and the Temple Bazaars and money-changers bring riches untold to Annas. Did not Crassus when he went out against the Parthians carry from the Temple gold uncounted? Did Pompey not take one hundred million of shekels in gold beside the beams of gold hidden in the hollow wood?"

"Yea, much fine gold," Antipas replied. "But thou art thyself a money-changer in the Temple, and its riches cometh to thy hands also."

"Thou dost not know Annas. Bled I am of my lawful profits else another get my place. Annas is all powerful. Yet have I a plan."

"What planneth thou?" and Antipas leaned across the table with eager eyes on the Jew.

"Let these three mighty ones—Herod of Tiberias, Zador Ben Amon of Jerusalem and Pilate of Rome—form a secret union for their profit and for breaking the power of Annas. What thinkest thou of such a union?"

"Thou art the son of a fool," and Antipas straightened up stiffly.

"A fool thou sayest? And wherefore?" Zador Ben Amon asked, somewhat confused by the sudden change in the attitude of his host.

Antipas leaned forward. His lips were securely drawn over the points of his teeth. His eyes, somewhat watery from much drinking, looked with anger into the steady eye of Zador. "Pilate," he began, "doth come riding to the Passover in a gold inlaid ivory chariot and with royal lictors, and in the Palace of Herod the Great doth he revel. Who builded this palace? What man should be seated on its throne?" He paused and held out his cup to the stewart who filled it afresh. "Who was the friend of Cleopatra and Anthony? Was it not Herod the Great, father of Antipas? Who went to Rome in a three-decked ship he builded, was taken to the Roman Senate and made King of the Jews? Was it not the father of Antipas? Who builded Cæsarea at the fountains of Jordan? Who builded the Temple, the arches, the monuments, the streets, the aque-

ducts, the walls, the towers and the Palace of Herod the Great, King of the Jews? Was it not Herod the Great, father of Antipas? And when he had died and the worms eaten him who was given command of the Tower of Antonio? Into whose hands was the Palace of Herod the Great given? Who is this Pilate—impostor of a Roman? Is he not the son of a heathen of Seville? Was not his father Marcus Pontius who deserted his countrymen when Rome made conquest in his land? Was he not rewarded for his treachery with the sharp-edged pilatus which gave to him the new name 'Pilate'? Did not the son of this heathen dog follow Germanicus and through him creep in among the Romans of high estate? Did he not wed Claudia Procula, granddaughter of Augustus? And shortly thereafter was he not made Procurator at Jerusalem? Who should sit in state in Herod's palace in Jerusalem? Antipas, son of the King of the Jews, who builded it, or Pilate who would grind him beneath his clanking Roman heel? And wouldst thou have me to form union with *this?*"

With flushed face Antipas paused to get breath. "More wine!" he called. He drained the cup and throwing it across the table, arose and walked the length of the room and back with heavy strides. Then he sat down and pounded the table shouting, "Hear, oh, Zador Ben Amon! not until the desire of Pilate be the desire of the son of Herod the Great

shall Antipas and Pilate come together! Dost thou understand? Like fleas on a dog these secret societies thou fearest may vex Rome. That is Rome's grievance. In Galilee know they better for the Gaulonite is yet remembered. Yet will I comb the province clean with teeth of steel that not one breaching insurrection may escape."

Antipas was trembling with rage. Zador Ben Amon saw that he had done little less than insult his host by his untimely suggestion about Pilate.

"Let not the peace of Antipas be disturbed by the power of Pilate in Jerusalem," he said quietly, moving nearer Antipas. "Like the mist of the morning his days pass, and what man knoweth who shall be Procurator then?"

"What meanest thou?" and the Tetrarch leaned forward with returning interest.

"We must be alone."

Antipas turned around to his stewart. "Begone!" he commanded. When the door had closed behind him, Zador's host with burning eyes whispered, "A plot? Hast thou heard in Rome of a plot against the life of Pilate?"

"Whether plot I know not. But by evil omens is the day marked for him, deadly as the Ides of March."

"Evil omens? From an oracle?"

"From an oracle under the wings of a raven and bat. Came the omen from the entrails of a falcon

which, when spread before the oracle, did lift themselves one against the other. Then did they tremble without touch of hand and did wrap themselves in a knot and struggle together until they did burst asunder. And from that which was hidden therein came forth the hind foot of a hare."

"The meaning thereof?" and Antipas waited.

"That which be hidden is no Roman. That which hideth it shall meet death my strangulation. Then shall that which hath been swallowed come forth to run a swift race."

Antipas reflected a moment. His anger was leaving him, but the tips of his teeth were not yet showing.

Zador Ben 'Amon turned to his cloak and from a wallet took out three leather cases, two of which he opened and placed on the table. The first contained a ring, the second a frontlet. "Of so excellent a nature hath been thy entertainment," said the Jew, "thou makest me to forget my gifts," and taking up the frontlet he handed it to Antipas. "This is a gift for the High Priest. Look thou at the filigree work around the amethyst, and the hyacinth color of the ribbon."

Antipas took it and Zador noticed that his fingers seemed to stick as he relinquished his hold.

"And this," Zador took the ring, "hath been made by workers of rare skill. Its jaspers came from far India. This is for Herod Antipas from his

friend Zador Ben Ämon," and he handed it to Herod.

The keen edge of the sharp teeth now came into view for a smile of long duration. When the ring had been duly admired, Antipas glanced at the third leather case. Zador opened it and drew forth an anklet which Antipas reached for. Slipping it over the fingers of his hand he held it up, and after examining its jewels, he shook it until it tinkled, and enjoyed it as a child enjoys a toy. When he had played with it a few moments he lifted his eyes to the Jew and studied him. "Thy desire is buried well under thy itch for gain," he said. "Yet do I now remember the eye of the money-changer when he spoke of the naked virgins."

"Is a money-changer not as other men?"

"With his two eyes ever set on gold and his ten fingers ever counting treasure, what eye or finger touch hath he left for woman? Is this for the profit of thy purse or the pleasure of the flesh?"

"It is a betrothal gift."

"Thou sayest! Beware an Asmonean princess!" and Antipas smiled broadly.

"A princess of Israel she is. I saw her in the shop of a Jerusalem silk dealer named Joel who will wed her sister. Her hair is fine as webs spun at night. She hath arms and a bosom her veil did but half conceal. So was I stirred into loving her. Her brother liveth at Bethany where she too abides and

there have I been. Fair she is and not upper-minded, and I go to make her my betrothed."

"And doth this fit?" Taking the circlet from his fingers Antipas put it on his wrist and shoved it as far up on his hair-grown arm as it would go. He then placed his broad hand on the table and gave an imitation of a woman walking. Both men roared with laughter as the hairy leg skipped and danced and hobbled while the bangles tinkled merrily.

"Thou art a keen Jew, my friend," Antipas said. "Thou tellest not the name of the woman. If she shall scorn thy gift then canst thou give it to another for, ever there are women whose softness can be thine for a jeweled trinket." And with a broad showing of sharp teeth, Herod Antipas removed the anklet from his arm and handed it back to Zador Ben Amon.

CHAPTER III

UNDER THE FOX'S NOSE

BEHIND the well guarded doors of a mud plastered house not far from the shores of Genassaret, a small company of Galilean peasants and fishermen had gathered to meet a *kurios** from a Phœnician *thiasos,*** who was making a pilgrimage to gather information and organize societies. When introduced to the little group, the *kurios* said, "I see the table spread for the supper. Around such a table have I sat in Greece and Asia Minor as well as in Italy. Great is its power of breaking down the hatred between races and of making strong the spirit of the Brotherhood. In every land, though customs are not the same and the tongues are strange, yet do those who enter in know the bath of acceptance; the common table; the common treasury; love of the living; care for the dead; hope for the future; worship of a divinity and belief that a Savior cometh.

*Lord and contract maker of ancient working man's society.

**One of several names of ancient working man's society.

Long hath it come to the ears of the *thiasos* how Galilee doth suffer. By the sword hath not a whole village of thy race been taken? Were not thy men shackled and thy maidens ravished? And ye who remain, art thou not taxed to the death?"

The words were spoken in low tones, yet there was a strange force in them. The speaker bent forward and the index finger he pointed at his hearers seemed to have been thrust suddenly from between his eyes. When the sleeve of his mantle fell back it disclosed upon his arm a fish, having a lion's head with a circle in its mouth.

"To gather news of thy distress, that is not hear-say, and to learn of thy hope, if hope thou hast, have I come. Speak on."

There was a moment of silence. Then a peasant stepped forward.

"Look thou!" and he threw back his skirt. "See thou these grievous wounds? I was set upon at the thrashing floor by a band of ruffians who demanded my wheat. And when I did say, 'Nay,' they did beat me, take the wheat and cast me into the chaff to die. And it hath since come to me that these ruffians are none other than servants of Annas, High Priest, who go about to pillage and destroy. Is it not so?" and turning to one side he lay hold of another man's arm. "Here is Herod's stewart. Hear him."

"Are the doors well barred and the court guards

alert?" the stewart questioned. "Are there watchmen on the housetop? Herod hath said he will comb Galilee with teeth of steel for such as this. Yea, one wounded and robbed brother hath spoken truly. Nor is this the worst. The Sicarii, those murderers that do so grievously afflict the whole province, these too ply their bloody business at the hands of Herod and Annas. For no sooner have the pirates been caught than they give over to Herod and Annas their booty except a small stipend. Then are these murderers turned loose to get yet more booty for the accursed bloodsuckers called priests and kings. Am I not of the household of Herod? Do I not know of these things? And of virgins despoiled do I not know?"

"Yea, yea—thou knowest!" The answer came sharply from a young fisherman whose head was bound in a faded red turban and who carried one arm in a sling.

"Yea! Yea!" cried several other voices. "Let Jael speak!"

"Oh, that Jael *might* speak!" he answered fiercely. "That Jael *might* find tongue to curse those thrice accursed heathen who but three days ago stole from him the maiden Sara. Oh, that he *might* find words to speak her fate, for rather than be polluted by the serpent touch of Belial, took she the bitter hemlock! Oh, that Jael could know where her body lieth that a pile of stones might cover it

from open corruption! Behold—" and from his breast he took a cord with a bit of cloth attached, which he held up. "Behold all that Jael the fisherman hath left of his betrothed—a little *tallith* found upon the floor where she had struggled! And look! Look, thou!" and he snatched from his head the dull red cloth which had bound an angry wound and waved it with savage swiftness before the *kurios*. "Behold all that is left of the father of Jael, the fisherman who followed the call of the Gaulonite to liberty from oppression, nor was the head that once this covering clung to, allowed its right to rot in a decent tomb. What hast thou of help to offer the oppressed?" and with a sudden twist he wrapped the cloth about his outstretched hand and held it toward the *kurios*.

In a well controlled voice strongly contrasting with that of Jael, the answer came. "If thou didst know the meaning of that which once didst bind thy father's head, then would thy question have its answer. If thou didst know the tongue the colors speak, the eyes of thy understanding would be open. The white of the gens families and the priests, hath it not from the hidden past meant 'washed' and 'set apart' from the soil of the world? And what is red —the color of the toiler since those flaming dieties, Ceres and Minerva, first presided over their destinies? Who first gave homage to the crimson of the rising sun? Hath it not ever been he who

labors? Whose strength bringeth forth the wheat and wine that maketh the red blood of mankind? Cometh it not of the toiler? Is it not told in ancient song that those of white robes dwell on thrones of gold in Mount Olympus while their vaulted dome doth rest on the shoulders of the slaves and humble, whose red robes have grown dun and murk and brown with soil and toil? Verily there are blood makers and devourers of that blood. Thy father, Jael the fisherman, didst know that the way of hope is the way of Brotherhood. So did he bind himself with others. The hand of Rome destroyed him. Yet the way of Brotherhood liveth."

A woman had entered the room as he spoke. She hastily put some cups on the table and then, in a voice vibrant with gladness, she repeated the words, "The way of Brotherhood," and lifting her hands high, palms upward, exclaimed, "My soul doth magnify the Lord!"

All eyes were turned to her. A beautiful woman she was about whose face, which shone as if fresh from a glory bath, silvery threads shone like a dim halo. Her fine dark eyes were lit with radiant brightness.

"James," she said addressing the master of the abode, "canst thou not see—canst thou not hear thy brother as he read from the Word when first he taught? Hear him; 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*. He hath anointed *me* to preach the gospel to

the poor. He hath sent *me* to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Hath not the Spirit of the Lord been upon him as he doth teach the way of Brotherhood and pray that this kingdom may come on earth? Yet he hath not spoken of a red banner."

"The kingdom he would set up," said a man of gentle voice and spiritual countenance who had not yet spoken, "cometh not with swords and banners, for hath he not said 'They that lift the sword shall perish by the sword?' There is a better way of Brotherhood. It cometh by the law that he doth teach."

"And what is the law of this, thy teacher that would bring Brotherhood?" and there was interest in the voice of the *kurios* as he asked the question.

"There is but one law. On it hangeth all law and all prophecy. Verily a new law it is so that no more forever shall an eye be given for an eye or one sword-thrust for another, for God is love."

"Love? No longer a sword for a sword? Thou dost speak a strange language! Shall naught be paid to robbers and murderers and despoilers of women but *love?* Yet until the time of the great Brotherhood, vain is the sword, for while the oppressed do rise here and there in small revolt, swift and terrible is their cutting down. Slow grows the Brotherhood. Yet since the mighty Solomon did

weld into one whole his stone-cutters and builders, hath those of like kind in toil and poverty come together; fruit sellers, wool carders, perfume makers, fortune-tellers, linen weavers, patch workers, wash women, dyers, image makers, ivory carvers, bridge builders, poets and singers, dwarfsmiths, seafarers, wonder workers, hunters for the amphitheatre, brothel keepers, all these and many others shall be gathered into one great society and in that day—" The words of the *kurios* were stopped suddenly by the sound of three quick knocks on the roof over their heads.

"The enemy is upon us!" James exclaimed. "Mary, bring the roast kid with great haste! Let every man be gathered about the table ready for a feast—and be merry."

A steaming kid was hurriedly brought and the men moved quickly to their places except Jael, who stepped behind the door and drew from his mantle, his long keen knife. When the soldiers entered shortly, with steps as stealthy as those of a cat, he moved out where their faces might be seen and scanned them swiftly, concealing his knife under his skirt.

"What goeth on?" one soldier shouted, while the other walked across the room and looked into the kitchen.

"I have a guest," James replied. "A kinsman whose father is my father's father. With him we feast."

"Feast?" and the soldier turned his attention to the table. "They do feast! Ha! Ha! Come hither."

The second soldier came, saying, "A banquet they give—Ho! Ho! For a better one would I take me to the stables of Herod."

"A kid have they that shineth with grease."

"Is it a kid? Methought it a sparrow."

"By its size, its bones will but breed a quarrel."

"Let us be keepers of the peace—for this hath Herod not appointed us?" and lifting his sword he brought it down on the roast kid severing it in two halves. "A sharp blade cutteth clean!"

"And a stiff leg maketh a good handle." And with the words each soldier seized with his left hand a half of the kid which he fell greedily upon, while holding his sword aloft in his right hand. With hungry teeth the soldiers tore the flesh from the bones, spewing such as they did not want on to the floor, and devouring the tender, until their cheeks shone like ruddy apples and their beards were drabbled with gravy. Then they dropped the remains on the floor and with their boot toes rubbed them over the mud that had dropped from their heels. When the flesh was well covered with filth, the two halves of the carcass were lifted by the sword point and flung back on the table with the words, "A feast they would have!" The soldiers cast their eyes over the angry but silent company, and broke into roars of laughter.

"A flock of sacred goats!" one said.

"Nay—by the stink of them, fish long rotten. Let us go hence! Ugh!" and pinching their noses, the soldiers left the abode.

There was silence in the room for a moment before the *kurios* said in low tones, holding his hand toward the door to enjoin caution, "What think ye, men of Galilee—needest thou a Brotherhood?"

"Yea—yea," came like a growl from the throats of the company.

"And who wilt thy leader be?"

All eyes were turned to James as his name was spoken.

"This night hast thou seen the fruit of the tree of oppression. What sayest thou?"

With the light of indignation in his eye and the tremor of wrath in his voice, the master of the house said, "In the words of one greater than I, 'Let the ax be laid at the roots of the tree.' And this also do I say, Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten! Your gold and silver is cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days! Behold! The hire of the laborers who have reaped down thy fields, which you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the

ears of the Lord of Sabaoth! Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton! Ye have nourished thy hearts as in a day of slaughter! Ye have condemned and killed the just!" Then addressing his words more closely to those about the table he said, "Be patient, therefore, brethern, unto the coming of the Lord. Be patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh—draweth nigh."

The Hallelujah, "My soul doth magnify the Lord!" broke the stillness that had fallen after the words of James. All eyes were turned again to the woman who had spoken once before.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats;
And exalted them of low degree:
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich hath he sent away empty."

As she stood with face aglow and arms extended, a strange pervading hush filled the room. Her voice, while mellow with sweetness and glad as a song yet had a depth that betokened mysterious strength.

"Who is this," the *kurios* asked, "that seeth what is to be while it is yet forming in the womb of pain? Who is this that shouteth victory before it hath been brought forth?"

"The woman speaketh of her son who hath come to establish the Kingdom," James answered. "And her soul doth greatly magnify the Lord."

"Who is her son?" and there was keen interest in the question.

"A Galilean even as we, and son of a carpenter. But he doth many mighty works and his heart turneth to the lowly. Jesus his name."

"I would see this Jesus. Where is he?"

"He hath gone apart into a mountain to pray, as is his custom. But tarry thou among us until he come, for of a truth he speaketh as never man hath spoken."

"I tarry," answered the *kurios*.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE VALLEY OF LILIES

THANKS to the untiring labor of Martha and her slow-moving servant Eli, the house of her brother Lazarus of Bethany was set in order three days before the expected arrival of Passover guests. Followed by Eli, who was girt about with a long towel, Martha made a last survey of the large and well furnished living-room, looking for a truant speck of dust. She paused for a moment at a table containing writing materials and bade the servant wipe it carefully and place it, with a case of scrolls, at one end of the wide, latticed window-couch, for here on the comfortable cushions Lazarus spent much time reading. She had just turned from the window-seat to a watering jar of fresh palm leaves when from the open way leading into the garden, two maidens entered.

"Martha," the first to enter said, laughing, "my guest Debora from Capernaum hath already arrived and I have brought her to see Mary's beds of lilies. Where is Mary? I saw her not in the garden," and she glanced about the room.

When greetings had been exchanged, Martha bade the man-servant go into the garden and look at the dial while she polished the already glossy palms. To Anna she said, "Thou knowest Mary. Was ever there another such Mary? Look you at these palms. Is it not enough that the garden be full to overflowing with vines and herbs? Yet would Mary fill the house with flowers of the wayside did I not struggle against it. Even now is she wandering off to a valley of lilies she hath found by the wady beyond Olivet, searching a strange lily for her beds. Ere the threefold blast of the Temple Priests awoke Jerusalem, were her eyes open. And look you at the sun mark on the dial, and yet Mary, dreamer of gardens and lilies and sweet odors, hath not yet returned."

"Nay—call not Mary a dreamer," Anna protested, "for names that are once given stick. Call they not my father 'Simon the Leper' for no reason than that in his youth he had an issue of blood? And while the world knows that his home could not be among the clean were he a leper yet doth the name hang to him. To fasten on her the title of 'dreamer' might lose Mary a good husband, for who wants a dreamer when the sparrow pie is burning to the pot?"

"Such is Mary, yet would I not spoil her chance of a husband though it be left for me to look after food and the pots and my stupid Eli. And if such

a chance as Zador Ben Amon should be hers—would not my heart rejoice?"

"Hath he spoken to Lazarus for her hand?"

"Nay, nor hath he supped with us for many months, nor even sent a message."

"Hath Mary's heart been heavy?"

"Nay, Mary hath not had time to grow heavy-hearted, for since the winter gave place to spring hath she been in the garden searching a warm spot for some chicken yet wet from the shell, or scratching the sod from some struggling seed. This is Mary," and Martha laughed good-naturedly as she finished rubbing the palms.

"Debora would see the garden," Anna said. "Such a lovely garden!"

"Yea," answered Martha, as they passed into the court, "yet doth Mary have strange ideas, for on top of the old wall that she would let no man tear down because of its vines which bind the stones together, she hath grasses growing, such grasses as grow by the wayside to be eaten of asses and goats. And when I asked Lazarus to have the wild green pulled out by the roots, he said since they injure not the wall and delight the heart of Mary by their playful wagging in the spring breeze, they shall stay. So there is a fringe of green blades set thick with blue blossoms on top of the old wall with vines, and of these, as of the valley of lilies she hath found,

doth Mary throw up her hands and cry—'Beautiful!'"

Anna and Debora laughed as Martha acted the part of Mary and they passed on toward the lily beds. Between the garden wall and the winding roadway, grew a luxurious grove of date palms which gave to the home of Lazarus its name. Inside the garden, pomegranates and grapes and figs grew, with melons and lentils and aromatic plants, in addition to Mary's garden of many colored lilies. In the center of the courtyard near the house was a water pool in a stony basin, and from the top of a pile of stones in the middle of the pool, water bubbled and dropped over the aquatic plants that grew along its sides. On the side of the pool nearest the house was the sun-dial. Close to the stairs which went to the housetop from the outside, was an olive tree of unusual size, the wide extended branches of which shaded a corner of the house and its roof garden, for Mary had shade-loving plants here also. Under this gnarled and ancient tree was a thick stone slab hewn into a seat and here Martha and her guests sat down, after walking through the garden, to talk of the Passover celebration just at hand, of Martha's lover Joel, the silk merchant, and Zador Ben Amon's wealth.

As Martha had said, her sister had set forth in the sunrise for a yet damp wady around the foot of

Olivet, where, before the time of blossoms, she had discovered beds of lilies. After an uninterrupted walk of a mile or two, Mary paused on the brow of Olivet and stopping to rest, turned her face to the east. Against the flood light of the rising sun the far distant Mountains of Moab cast dim blue skylines. Emerging from the many-hued green hills that rose in the foreground, like a twisted thread, stretched the Jericho road which led past the garden wall of Lazarus' home in Bethany. Even at this early hour pilgrims on foot and on donkeys were journeying toward the scene of the great Passover.

From the east Mary turned her face to the west. Often had she seen Jerusalem before, yet now she gave an exclamation of joy as the ascending sunlight fell in floods of golden glory over the snowy towers and gold minarets of the City of David, secure on its summit of rugged fastness. "Who has not seen Zion knows not what beauty is!" she exclaimed. "Zion—fairest throughout the earth!" The veil which she had loosely bound about her head had fallen from her shoulders and the morning breeze touching her soft dark hair was moving it gently around her face while unseen fingers stirred the hem of her woolen skirt above her dew wet sandals. The altar smoke of the morning offering was ascending from the Temple of snow and gold, casting delicate and ever changing spirals of gray and black against the rosy sky, and now and then the

silver glint of a dove's wing caught the eye as it circled over one of the shining domes. Filled with racial pride as well as with artistic admiration, Mary looked to the west, hidden, except its sky, by the battlements of Jerusalem. But she knew that at the West Gates the great highway to Joppa and the sea entered the city and although no glimpse of it could be seen, she knew that the long and dusty miles would soon resound to the call of the driver, as caravans of wares for the Passover sale came through the gates.

After a last long look at the shining Temple, Mary turned to the south. As she did so the exquisite fragrance of grape blossoms came to her on the changing breeze and she laughed with joy as her eager eyes took in the parorama, of vineyards here and there with their gray watch towers set in nature's most delicate filigree of green; of billowing fields of grain; of groves of olives turning color from green to gray and white as moved by the breeze, and back of it all the mountains of Judea, their rugged outlines softened by the rose and purple mist of the morning. In this direction the road leaving Jerusalem went into the south as far as Hebron.

Before pursuing her way she turned to see what signs of life appeared on the great Damascus road which led to the north through Samaria and Galilee. Here, as far as the eye could reach, glimpses of com-

panies which seemed but slowly-moving specks in the distance, drew nearer the Holy City to worship or to profit. At the foot of a near-by hill a flock of goats, with herdsmen keeping close watch, were browsing among the prickly pears, feeding their last before being driven into the Temple stalls as sacrificial beasts. On another road a company of Arabs was putting up its mean and ragged tents and just beyond some Galilean peasants were building booths. Turning from the brow of the olive-green Mount, Mary made her way down a dim trail toward the valley of lilies she had discovered. Around her feet the gently sloping hillside was a mass of flowers, blood red anemones, spotted tulips and blue star blossoms. In the winter, with the bare gray stones scattered about in confusion, this place was dreary as poverty itself. But now the wealth of beauty that lay over it suggested the joy of the Passover to the whole world.

It was while picking golden narcissus in her lily valley, Mary's heart was gladdened by the sudden outburst of a nightingale in a thicket close at hand. Careful watching was rewarded by a sight, not only of the singer but of a nest with three little ones in it. While she yet peeped at the nestlings, a man appeared with an ax. He was looking for boughs with which to thatch his booth and his eye was on the nightingale's home. Taking the nest from its hiding-place Mary tucked it under her veil, wrapped

her lily stems in wet leaves and started away. A moment later a stroke of the ax felled the bush that had housed the birds. Looking back Mary saw the mother bird fluttering wildly about over the cast-off pile of leaves. "Knowing not her little ones are safe she suffers pain," she said to herself.

She had not gone far along the roadway when she came upon the tent of a Bedouin. A woman holding an infant on one arm had just stepped out. She looked about anxiously until her eye caught sight of a goat grazing at no great distance. By its broken tether the goat had made its escape. The milk and cheese of the family depended on the goat. In no spoken word could Mary converse with the woman, but she understood, and holding out her arms for the child, pointed toward the goat. The swarthy woman nodded, placed the little brown baby in the arms of the unknown friend, and hurried after the goat.

Sitting on a flat stone behind the tent, Mary, who had for the moment removed from her bosom the veil in which she had wrapped the nestlings and was quieting their calls for their mother by fitting her warm palm close over them, was suddenly startled by what seemed to be an infinite throb, a passion unspeakable and mysterious. She did not know that the mouth of a sucking child is a vortex in which the interplay of universal forces starts into vibration a thousand generations of instinctive

motherhood. Nor did the little brown baby know aught of this. Moved by the first impulse of Nature which makes every mother a universal mother, the instinct of self-preservation had turned the face of the child to the breast of Mary. Looking about with a glance of apprehension lest she should be discovered in some unworthy act, she hastily moved the infant from her arm and the nestlings from her veil which she gathered over her shoulders and bosom. The birds she tied in a loose end of the veil and hid them in the front of her garment. Meantime the baby was crying lustily and making feeble and aimless motions of protest or desire with its tiny brown fingers. Mary was trying to quiet it by walking when the Bedouin woman returned with the goat.

The sun was shining high and the roads were peopled with pilgrims as she made her way back to Bethany with her nestlings and narcissus. But the way did not seem long, for out of her visit to the valley of lilies had come a new mystery for her mind to dwell upon—the eternal mystery of motherhood awakening. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings shall come wisdom." The words of one of the Rabbis kept coming to her. But what was the wisdom? Her only impression at the time was the strange suggestion that because both nestlings and Bedouin babe had mistaken her for their mother, they must be brothers. When Mary reached home she found Martha and her guests in a state of

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pleased excitement. News had just been brought by Lazarus that Zador Ben Amon had arrived in Jerusalem after a long journey in far lands, and would sup with them the day following. Especially had he sent his respects to Mary.

"Thou canst feed him, and Lazarus entertain him with his merry speech-making," Mary observed quietly as she took the nestlings from her veil.

"And what wilt thou do for thy distinguished guest?" Anna asked of Mary.

"I will watch with great care these little nightingales so that they may live in the thicket by the spring just over the garden wall. And next year when Zador Ben Amon doth pass with his camel train from Damascus will their sweet song welcome him home."

"No greater guest doth come to the Passover than Zador Ben Amon—and he hath an interest in thee, Mary."

"Yea—a greater than he hath come to the Passover," said Anna. "From Rome hath Pilate come, so sayeth my father, and with a retinue of servants that doth make Herod green with envy. And speech hath it that the wife of Pilate doth dazzle the eye with such gorgeous apparel as is seen only in the Roman circus."

"Glad is my heart," said Martha, "that Herod be undone in the glory of display for apeth he not the

Romans? Herod is great when there is none greater, but ever doth Rome send the greatest."

"Nay, not Rome sends the greatest to the Passover." It was Debora who spoke. "From Capernaum cometh he."

"Capernaum of Galilee?" Martha exclaimed. "The home of fishermen?"

"Yea, verily. From Galilee doth a prophet come the like of which hath not been seen since Elias was taken in a chariot of fire and whirlwind."

"Thou dost speak strange words," Mary observed. "Who is this prophet?"

"He is called Jesus of Nazareth, for there did he live before his home was at Capernaum."

"Nazareth," Anna repeated with curling lip. "Nazareth is a town of beggars and thieves, so sayeth my father. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? My father hath mentioned the name of Jesus—was he at the Passover feast last year?"

"Yea, and the Feast of Tabernacles," Debora answered.

"Jesus of Nazareth," Martha repeated, putting her hand to her forehead. "Methinks Lazarus did mention the name when Joseph of Arimathea was our guest. Dost thou remember, Mary?"

"The name? Yea, I remember. But what of it? None said he was a prophet."

"Listen," Debora said, leaning eagerly forward and half whispering: "Knowest thou not that Israel

hath long been dispersed and scattered like sheep without a shepherd? Knowest thou not that the cohorts of Rome guard the Sacred Temple and profane the Sanctuary of the Most High? Knowest thou not the heart of Israel hath long waited for the king who shall restore again the throne of David? And knowest thou not that the time is at hand for the coming of the promised one? Aye, even so hath he already come, and his name is Jesus."

"By what sign is he the Messiah?" Mary asked.

"By the sign of a prophet, and the greatest of all prophets is he. Once was I at the home of Peter when his wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Her skin was hot as if her couch were in a bake oven; her eyes did shine and vain was her babbling. Then came the Prophet of Galilee. On her head where the heat raged he placed his hand. Close and firm he held it as if he were holding down a struggling world. And lo! The struggling world grew quiet. The vain babbling of the parched lips ceased. Then did he speak. Aye—Mary, Martha, Anna—to hear his voice—deep like unsounded depths, mellow like the music of the viol and restful as when small waves play upon smooth shores. Twice did he speak. There was stillness. His eyes were fastened kindly on the face of her who lay beneath his touch. Then did she open her eyes. Her lips did part in a smile. She arose and by the open casement did stand to breathe deep of the cool air. And

those who had gathered in the street to set up the death-wail, did cry, 'A miracle! A miracle!' "

"But it is not a miracle to heal those who are not dead. Do not the Rabbis heal the sick?" Mary asked.

"And the prophets are all dead," Martha added.

"Wait and see," was Debora's answer.

CHAPTER V

HULDAH AND ELIZABETH

IN a gala dress of blue with silver embroidery, Martha, her faithful Eli close at hand and girt in a clean towel, awaited the coming of Passover guests, for the few days preceding the Feast were used for visiting, and Lazarus and his sisters had many friends. The first guest to arrive was Huldah, wife of a Temple scribe. Martha opened the door. The servant took his place behind a stool near the door with a basin of water.

"Sit thee down," Martha said after greetings. "Let thy feet be cooled. The way is dusty for ten thousand feet press to the City of David."

"Yea, from all the world they come to see the Temple of the Jews," Huldah answered. "For a week hath the ring of the hammer sounded over the hills where the roadways are made safe, and tombs are fresh whitened that none be rendered unclean. All Jerusalem is a guest chamber. Where is Mary?" and she glanced about the room.

"She is in the garden with Anna and her Caper-

naum guest Debora. And Debora hath been saying a prophet hath arisen the like of which hath not been seen since Elijah went up in his fiery chariot."

"A prophet! A prophet!" exclaimed Huldah, greatly interested. "Whence cometh he?"

"From Galilee—but the maidens are coming. Ask Debora."

In festive attire and carrying flowers, Anna and Debora entered the room, followed by Mary, gowned in clinging white caught high on her breast and falling away leaving her arms bare. Her hair had blown softly about her face. Her cheeks were like almond blossoms and a white veil caught around her head by a carved silver chaplet, fell over her shoulders. After the greeting, Huldah turned to Debora.

"Hast thou said a prophet cometh from Galilee?"

"So I have spoken."

"Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

"From Galilee cometh Jesus of Nazareth."

"Jesus of Nazareth!" Huldah exclaimed, throwing up her hands.

"Hast heard of him?" Martha inquired.

"Jesus son of Gamaliel, successor to Jesus son of Damneus; Jesus son of Sie; Jesus son of Phabet! Be there no end to the Jesus' sons? And now cometh the worse of them all. Yea, I have heard of him. A wolf in sheep's clothing—a false prophet

is he. Never was he taught in the Temple school, yet doth he dare within its sacred portals to teach others. By an evil one is he led."

"Why dost thou say by an evil one?" asked Debora.

"Dost thou, a daughter of Israel, so ask? Aye, is it not evil to speak against the traditions of the Elders? No worse to blaspheme the Temple itself! Is not Israel the chosen of God, and hath it not been written there is no salvation outside Israel? Had there been no Jew the Law from Sinai had not been given and we too would be unclean as the Gentiles. What worse could one do than set at naught the traditions of the Elders? But this is not all. He doth both harvest and winnow on the Holy Sabbath."

"Harvest and winnow on the Sabbath?" Martha asked in surprise.

"Yea, and this is not all. He is a friend of publicans."

"Publicans? Those vile wretches who filch from the pockets of Israel to pay for the pageantry of Rome?" It was Anna who questioned.

"Yea, and this is not all. He is also a friend of the defiled Samaritan, friendly as a brother is he with these heathen—and—and—" she whispered, "he keepeth company with harlots."

"Harlots!" exclaimed the maidens under their breath.

"Yea—what manner of prophet thinkest thou *this* be?"

"Hast thou thyself seen the evil things of which thou beareth witness?" Debora asked of Huldah.

"Nay, but such are the reports."

"Our guest Debora hath both seen the face of him and heard his voice," Mary observed.

Huldah laughed. "And what so easy for a false prophet to deceive with smooth speech and searching eyes, as a maiden's heart? But enough of such talk as doth vex the Rabbis. See thou my cloth of gold? With my needle I shall make it gay with crimson pomegranates." Huldah took her embroidery from her bag, and the young women stood around admiring her work when voices were heard outside. Martha turned to the lattice window and looked out.

"More pilgrims are coming. A mother in Israel is to be our guest. She cometh with a neighbor and leaneth heavily on her staff. Mary—Mary! It is Elizabeth. Hasten to meet her."

Mary hurried out. When she had gone Huldah asked, "Who is this aged Elizabeth?"

"Knowest thou not? She is the mother of John the Baptiser whose head Herod did give as a bauble to the vile Herodias." Huldah rose hurriedly and looked out the window.

"The mother of John Baptist, he who did come from the caves of the mountains with the garment

of a wolf, the beard of a lion and the voice of a bear. Jerusalem turned out to hear the man. Possessed of a devil was he. Aye, and the hair of his mother be white like the cap of snow that sits on Hermon's head. Verily a foolish son bringeth down his mother's hair in sorrow. If the Rabbis are not able to teach the Law, shall one wild from the desert be able? For attending to business not his own lost he his head."

"Lean on me," said Mary, just outside the door. "My feet have not traveled the hard path so long."

"The blessing of Jehovah on thee, my daughter," Elizabeth replied as they came up the steps. In ample black drapery and wearing a widow's headdress, the aged woman entered. "Peace be to this house and to thy hearts, my daughters," she said with upraised hands. She was conducted to a wide armchair, and Mary threw back her black mantle and Eli unloosed her sandals.

"There are many pilgrim feet pressing toward the Passover Feast," Huldah said.

"Yea, my daughter. And some whose feet pressed the pilgrim path last year have gone on a longer pilgrimage, a farther journey than to the City of Zion—yea to the Heavenly Zion have they gone." Elizabeth rested her head wearily against the back of the chair and tears rolled down her withered cheeks. Mary knelt beside her and taking her hands said gently, "Weep not! From our brother

have we heard what Herod hath done. It was cruel, aye, cruel as the grave to take thine son—the only son of thine old age. But weep not!"

"Cruel as the grave! So seemeth it. Yet the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. The Lord truly blessed me in that it was given me to be the mother of a prophet. Strange too, was it, for the spring-time of my life had gone. Yea, the ten years had passed after which the Israelite may give a writing of divorcement to a barren wife. Yet did the love of my husband live and in the fulness of time to us a son was born. A Nazarene did he grow, neither cutting his beard, nor drinking wine nor looking on women. And as Elijah came from the wilds of Gilead to confound Ahab, so came the son of my bosom from the wilds of Judea crying in the ear of an adulterous generation, 'Prepare ye! Prepare! There cometh one after me whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' And as he did declare, so hath that mightier appeared—aye, the hope of Israel. Not a Nazarene is he. Came he both eating and drinking and loving womankind, and lo! of him they say 'a wine bibber and a glutton.' But, daughters, wisdom be justified of her children. Lo, he that hath been promised to restore again the glory of Israel is even now in the City of our God!"

"Strange words thou speakest," said Huldah.

"Thou dost not speak of Jesus of Nazareth?" Mary asked.

"Even of him," the aged woman answered.

"Art thou of his acquaintance?" Debora asked with interest.

"Even more, for was not the mother of her who bare Jesus even the sister of my father?"

"Thy kinsman he is? Thou hast looked upon his face and heard the wondrous voice that doth drive away fever?"

"Yea, have I seen and heard, both the son and his mother and father, for twice did I visit under the roof of my cousin."

"His mother—what of her? Is she skilled in savoring rich sop?" Martha asked.

"She hath not possessed the wherewithal to make rich sop, yet in her veins runneth the blood of kings. Of the house of David hath she come."

"And where hath she been in hiding, this royal-blooded Jewess?" Huldah asked.

"In the rude home of a Galilean peasant, for poverty hath been her lot. Yea, in the stone feed-trough of a cattle shed was Jesus born because his father had not the price of keep at the inn. A little lad at Nazareth was he when I first saw him."

"A little lad," Mary repeated. "What manner of little lad was he?"

"Beside his mother's knee he heard stories of the brave and mighty of Israel. He walked with his mother by the sea and in the fields. He loved the fowls of the air, the hares and the foxes. And

such questions did he ask as no man hath wisdom to answer. While his mother toiled he played with the children of the village. When they played funeral right vigorously would he weep with the mourners. When they played wedding with those who piped, piped he, and with those who danced, danced he until his small garments, like wings, flew apace. Mild was he and obedient, yet when his hand was lifted in wrath it did strike hard. Once he did fight. Aye, and a good fight it was and over the wall did he send with the speed of a wild ass and fierce blows, a lad twice his size. His mother did bind his black eye in a fig leaf poultice and tell him fighting were not good for little lads. I remember yet his face as he did make answer, 'Woman, know'st thou not our father David did smite a giant which did torment Jehovah's chosen ones? Even so did I smite him who was plucking hair from the head of a feeble child who could do naught but cry out. For this did I send him over the wall, and no more will he do this evil thing when I am nigh.' "

"Blessings on him," laughed Debora, clapping her hands.

"My heart goeth out to such a lad," Mary said.

"What for?" Huldah asked. "For making bloody another lad's nose?"

"If so be that to bloody a nose is the only way to stay the hand of oppression."

"And yet another time did I see him," Elizabeth

continued. "At a wedding in Cana, when he had grown to man's estate. Merry were the guests with feasting and shouting when the wine did fall short. In an outer room were some firkins which Jesus did order filled with water. When the water was drawn out, it was wine."

"This is no sign of a prophet," Huldah answered quickly. "Ofttimes have I with a cup of grape sirup well thickened, made a kid skin of wine. What sign hath he given of being a prophet that hath not already been given?"

"From the dungeon my John asked this question," Elizabeth answered slowly. "After other things did Jesus say, 'Tell John I have come to bring the gospel to the *poor*.'"

Huldah laughed heartily. Then she said, "Of a surety this is a sign no prophet hath given. The poor? Who taketh account of the poor? Poverty is a visitation of Jehovah. Ever have the poor been despised and forsaken. Cursed be the lot of the poor—yea, thrice cursed!"

"Yea, cursed be the lot of the poor. Even was this the lot of Jesus of Galilee. Oft was his food but dried locusts. Oft bore his thin garments many patches. Oft was a heavy yoke put on the burden of his childish shoulders. For this pitieth he the poor."

"Locusts for the belly; patches for the back; a yoke for the shoulders! Shame on Israel that of this sort it would call a king—even from Galilee

where women labor in the field and men like cattle toil!" and Huldah's lip curled with scorn.

"The toiler toileth that Herod may make great banquets. Pilate doth ride in a golden chariot and Cæsar feed men to tigers. When cometh the King of the Jews, such will be done away with, for again will slaves be set free and the Year of Jubilee proclaimed."

"A king must be a *King*—not a herder of sheep or a driver of oxen," was Huldah's emphatic reply.

"Was not our glorious David a keeper of sheep before the crown was put upon his head? Not whence he cometh, but the kind he is, doth decide the quality of kings," Mary observed thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VI

HARD SAYINGS

THE table was set for the evening meal in the home of Lazarus. Martha was in the kitchen urging Eli to more speed in final preparations, and Mary was arranging a bowl of vari-colored lilies on the table. Entering the room Martha paused to look at her sister. "Mary," she exclaimed, "thou dost spend time as though lilies made fit eating."

"Fit eating? Nay, but Zador Ben Amon doth sup with us to-night. From the splendors of Rome hath he come. Shall we not set forth for him the better splendors of lilies in all their glory? And should I not help make joyful the coming of Joel who hath been away two weeks?"

"It is wine in the cup and meat well seasoned that doth delight the heart of man."

"The perfume of flowers doth breathe of giving. So do they breathe of love which doth ever give, until a woman giveth herself to be loved of a man as thou art promised to Joel. How strange and holy a thing is love!"

"Mayhap it is strange; mayhap is is holy. But get thou the sop bowls. Joel and Lazarus are coming."

"Ha! ha! ha!" The laughing voice sounded just outside the door. "The face of him was like—ha! ha!—it was like—like—" and again the words ended in laughter.

"Like what was the face of him?" a second voice asked.

"A mild ass well beaten,—ha—ha!"

"Lazarus is in a merry mood to-day," Mary said to Martha.

"It taketh not much to gladden his heart," was Martha's answer, as the two men entered the room. When Joel had kissed Martha and exchanged greetings with Mary, she said to Lazarus, "Thou comest in good spirits, my brother."

"Yea," replied Joel, "a bit of wit doth make him to bubble over like sour wine in a kid skin, and thrice doth he bubble at wit from the lips of a prophet."

"Is there a prophet given to wit?" Mary inquired.

"Nay, not to wit," Lazarus answered. "To wisdom he is given, yet in his wisdom doth often sparkle wit."

"Who is this prophet that causeth thy pleasure?" Mary asked.

"Another Jesus—Jesus of Nazareth this one is."

"Is there none other at the Passover Feast than he to talk of?" was Martha's question. "Naught have we heard from our guests to-day save of him. Now again hear we more."

"Lazarus is much taken with his teachings which he calleth wisdom. Methinks his sayings are hard, eh, Lazarus?"

"Yea, hard sayings," the master of the house replied seriously, as he settled himself on the window couch. "Yet is there that within them which giveth wine its flavor," and again he laughed.

"What was the saying that did please thee?" Mary asked.

"Knowest thou what the Law sayeth about graven images? Aye, to touch one defileth a Jew. With fierce righteousness do those in authority contend for observance of the letter of the law. Was not much blood spilled when Pilate sought to put an image of Cæsar in the Temple? The Galilean Prophet oft setteth aside the Law. For this reason do the Scribes and Pharisees seek to entangle him. Taking council, they did say to him, 'What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?' Hard by stood many with their ears well open. And near at hand stood I. Upon him who spoke and those his followers, did the Galilean look. Then did he say, 'Why tempt me, ye hypocrites?' With these words did the countenances of his tempters grow long like their beards and take on a grievous

expression like a beast unjustly berated. 'Show me the tribute money,' said he. With exceeding quickness were their hands thrust into their pockets, while the eyes of those who stood by watched close. As the Prophet of Galilee did take on his palm the coins, the corners of his beard did twitch yet was his voice grave as he said, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' With one voice they did answer, 'Cæsar's'—and by my most precious beard so bore the coins the image of Tiberius! Dost thou get the flavor of the situation? Breathing out fierce contention for the letter of the Law, go they about with their wallets stuffed with images—stuffed with images of Tiberius! Ha! ha! ha! Thou shouldst have seen their faces when those who stood by to see them entrap the Galilean laughed at them boisterously."

The story told by the young man ended in a hearty laugh, which was entered into by the others.

"Did he make answer?" Mary asked.

"Aye. Listen now if thou wouldst hear wisdom. Giving their images back to those who sought to entangle him, he said, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' "

"Had they an answer?" It was Mary again who questioned.

"None save the face of them. It were enough—ha! ha!"

"Lazarus is much taken with this man," Martha observed. "Art thou, too, gone after him, Joel?"

"Nay. I like him not. Far be it from the business of a Galilean peasant to tell a merchant of Jerusalem that riches be a curse."

"And hath he said this to thee?" Martha inquired in astonishment.

"Yea, at the gate where my camel did stick and skin his nether quarters."

Lazarus laughed again as he exclaimed, "Enough it were to make dry bones shake! Such a sight! Tell it, Joel."

"Lazarus doth make light of matters sorely vexatious," Joel said without smiling.

"What did happen, Joel?" and there was concern in Martha's question.

"My camel train bearing great stores of silks had come from Damascus. The city gates were gorged with pilgrims so that my men did lead their beasts to the far side of the city wall where the small gates are. Here, when the camel would have walked under, he could not for the bales of silk that did wedge against the stones. Then did we strip the beasts, yet were their frames too large. Then did we get them on their knees and while some did pull, others did push. I stood with those in the rear and most mightily did I push until sweat did drop from my head and much straining did rend my *kittuna*."

"Didst get the camel through?" Martha asked anxiously.

"Yea, save the patch of hide he did leave sticking on the stone walls."

"Thou shouldst have seen," Lazarus laughed, "thou shouldst have seen thy Joel. Like a dog of the hills did he pant and like the swine of the heathen did he grunt."

"Were there bystanders to witness thy sad plight?" Martha asked the question of Joel.

"Yea, hard by stood a small company, one of them in the garment of a Rabbi. Beholding the struggling he said, 'Verily, verily, it is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into Heaven.' Then did those about fasten searching eyes on me, and I like him not."

"The truth doth fit close, friend Joel. Now to me did he also make a hard speech, yet I like him the more for his plain speaking."

"And hast thou too had speech with the Galilean? Tell me, my brother?" Mary asked.

"Lazarus would be his disciple," Joel remarked.

"Lazarus! Our brother? The son of a Sanhedrin Pharisee be the disciple of a Galilean?" and there was consternation in the voice of Martha.

"Thou hast spoken," he replied quietly, arranging himself more comfortably on the couch. "The Law have I studied since the days of my father. Hillel and Shammiah have I poured over and of

Philo have I sought knowledge. Yea, even of the heathen Socrates have I sought knowledge. But, it is vain. The traditions of the Elders do weary me for at last tradition is no more than tradition. What avails fierce contentions over the ashes of the red heifer, the waving of willows or the pouring of holy water? Whether the Sadducees or the Pharisees gain the contention the burden remaineth the same. At times have I thought of turning to the spade and apron and white robe of the Essenes where there be no Aaronic priesthood or bloody sacrifice."

"But this Jesus—is he an Essene? Hast thou heard aught of his teachings?"

"Yea, Mary. In the Temple doth he tell of a Kingdom where the Law shall be less and justice and liberty more, a Kingdom of Brotherhood which the sword bringeth not but which cometh as springtime brings a new earth. Wonderful did this teaching sound, and as I did drink it in, turned he his face to me as if my lips had called him. And I did know, even as his eye rested on mine, that I should love him, yea, as if he were a brother. Again did I draw near as he did pass on Solomon's porch, and again did his eyes find my face. Then did I ask what I should do to be his disciple. 'Keep the commandments,' was his answer. 'All these have I kept from my youth up,' I made answer. But it were not enough."

"It should be enough. What more doth the Law require?" Joel asked.

"Yet," observed Mary thoughtfully, "there be no virtue in keeping the Law which bids us not steal, so long as the belly is full of red wine and rich mutton."

"Or in coveting thy neighbor's fat wife when a shapely Martha is promised. Eh, Joel?" Lazarus questioned.

They all laughed. Joel's reply was, "Not virtue, nay. But where is virtue in the hard sayings he did put to Lazarus?"

"A hard saying truly," Lazarus repeated. "He did bid me sell my possessions and give to the poor."

"The Law doth not allow but a certain portion for the poor."

"Thou sayest truly, Mary. Yet him whose disciple I would be, says, 'Give all.'"

"Thy vineyards and wine presses?" and Martha's face was troubled.

"Thy olive orchard?" and Mary too expressed concern.

"Yea, and thy home and garden and fountain and thy chickens and lilies, Mary," Joel answered quickly.

"An evil spirit doth work in his head," was Martha's observation.

"Why said he this to thee, my brother?" and Mary stood by Lazarus with perplexed face.

"That I should love him more than all these."

"He doth require much love."

"Yea, verily, much love doth he require for much doth he give and everything doth he make of love. Sorrowful I turned away. Yet will I see him again. But, Mary—Martha—look thou at the western sky. Hast thou made ready for our honored guest, Zador Ben Amon, who arriveth shortly? Fortunate is he as those of the House of Annas since with the money-changers hath the High Priest given him a place so that he hath riches more abundant than us all. Since he hath been our guest before, his heart hath become settled on Mary and of her hand hath he spoken to me already."

"And thou wert not slow to say 'yes.'" There was joy in Martha's question, though it was not a question.

"'The heart of a woman should go out to him whose wife she would be; and the heart is not worn on the hand. Tell thy desire to Mary.' This said I to Zador who seeks her hand."

"Listen!" exclaimed Martha.

The sound of wheels on the pebble strewn incline just outside, told the approach of Zador Ben Amon.

CHAPTER VII

LOST—AN ANKLET

THE face of Zador Ben Amon was divided into two halves, the upper of which reached from the line of his black beard that ran straight under his cheek-bones, to the lower edge of his elegant head covering. Prominent in this half were the eyes of Zador Ben Amon, but whether those of a wolf, a fox or a saved son of Israel, was a matter of reciprocity depending on the kind and condition of profit-making at hand. The lower portion of the money-changer's face was again divided into two halves by a thin white line running from lip to chin; this line was preserved by choice oils applied liberally to his beard hair. The solidity of Zador Ben Amon, whether financial or otherwise, was suggested by the broad back of his short body and in the square shape of his feet, whose bones bulged in spite of the best of sandals. To cover his broad back, Zador had a wonderful cloak of blue with a purple stripe above the border where crimson pomegranates were embroidered. With this cloak over

his arm, for the season was getting too warm for more back covering than the usual garment, with new hand-wrought silver buckles on his sandals, a jaunty sash with deep knotted fringes, and with hair and beard perfumed, he made his way to the home of Lazarus at Bethany.

The wheels of his carriage had not yet turned from the door when Zador Ben Amon was welcomed by Lazarus and bidden through the open door, inside which stood Mary and Martha and Joel. His greeting to Martha was brief. Toward Mary he advanced with smiling face, as if to embrace her. "Nay?" he questioned as she drew back. "Didst not thy brother tell thee I have decided to make thee my betrothed?"

"The words my brother spake I did not so understand," she replied, stepping yet farther back from him.

"Then hath the pleasure been left for Zador, son of Amon, to tell Mary of the House of Dates that he hath come to make her his betrothed and hath brought her a fit gift."

"But I know thee not save as a friend of my brother Lazarus, nor dost thou know me."

"And what needst thou to know save that I am among Israel's rich and mighty and would take thee to wife? And what need I to know of thee more than that thou art fair and a woman? Doth the

hungry beast not know its heart's desire? To thy brother have I spoken."

"And hath Lazarus given you knowledge that my heart is in his keeping?" Mary asked.

"Hearts!" Zador exclaimed, laughing like one well fed. "Lazarus, thy fair sister doth take hearts into account rather than shekels and talents of gold."

"Perhaps there is wisdom in the words she speaketh when she saith you know her not," and Lazarus smiled. "Seat thyself and make ready for a better acquaintance."

"Thou speakest," Zador answered heartily, glancing toward the window-seat. "But before thou layest my cloak aside would I show it to the maidens. At a great price I secured this," and he held it toward Martha and Mary.

"Its colors are most beautiful," Mary said.

Martha had slipped her hand inside the folds and was closely examining the needlework.

"From hem to hem the pomegranates reach," Zador explained, noticing Martha's interest. "Doth not the needlework far exceed that of Israel's workers in fine thread?"

"The workmanship is wonderful. Yet here are loose stitches at the top of the border."

Zador caught up the cloak hem and examined it with careful eye as he said, "Thou knowest. On the morrow will it be mended. But now, since Zador hath come to know that Mary and Martha

delight in rich apparel, let him tell them of garments that dazzle the eye for glory and riches."

"Robes of Rome?" Martha asked with keen interest.

"Yea, as I saw them in banquet hall and amphitheatre."

When the guest's cloak had been carefully put aside and his feet washed, the group gathered in the wide window-seat where he reclined, to hear news from Rome. "Hath the fame of the garment of Lolilla Pauline come to your ears?" he asked.

"Nay," answered Martha.

"Of seed pearls was it covered and over the pearls lay leaves of emerald. Forty million sesterces did it cost. Thou holdest up thy hands? Then will I tell thee of one that did cost fifty million sesterces —the like of which eye hath not seen before. On a robe of pearls sprinkled with diamonds, sat a peacock of great size so that his head did rest on the shoulders of the wearer and the tail of the bird did cover her back. And of rare jewels was this bird made; emeralds and rubies and topaz and sapphire and amethyst and opals and jacinths, set with such skill as to make the breast-plate of the High Priest a bauble. What delighteth the heart of a woman more than rich wearing apparel?" The question followed his description of the jewels and he laughed heartily at Martha's expression of amazed delight.

"Yet another garment would I tell thee of, such

a one as eye hath not before seen." He stopped to laugh heartily. "A garment it also was of many colors," and again he laughed. "In that which is filthy and cast away do rag-pickers stir and strive. And when they have great stores of that which is vile and useless, do they sew it together into a garment and sell it for a pittance to a slave to cover his naked body. Such a rag-picker's garment saw I. Such a sight—sold for such a pittance."

"But might not the pittance paid for a rag-picker's garment be more to the slave than fifty million sesterces to one whose toil earned not even the first of them?" asked Mary.

"Ask me not questions about slaves, the rabble. Thou knowest they are but broilers and vile."

"Perhaps," Mary answered thoughtfully, "if slaves and the rabble were better fed they would broil less. Doth not Baba Metzia say 'When the barley in the jar is finished, quarrels come thundering through the house'?"

"Thou knowest nothing of slaves and the rabble, fair Mary. Never are the poor content. Give them bran and vinegar and they want herbs. Give them herbs and they want lentils. Give them lentils and they want sop of mutton. And once sop-fed will they cry aloud for the mutton itself. Cursed be the poor, by God. Let them be accursed." And the money-changer nodded his head in approval of his speech.

"Yea, accursed be the poor," said Lazarus. "Yet it seemeth not so much according to the curse of God as to the greed of man. To the rich their riches come by inheritance as came mine. Or cometh riches by great cunning and skill in taking from others."

"As cometh mine," Zador Ben Amon laughed, rubbing his hands and looking from one to the other for approval. "And even now my palms grow hot for that which shall come into them from my Temple booths at the Passover. But how dost thou reason, Lazarus? If there are rich and mighty must there not of necessity be the poor and weak?"

"Yea. Yet is this according to the Law of Moses? According to the Law was not grain left in the corners for the gleaners? Was not stealing and lying forbidden among Israelites? Was usury not forbidden under great penalty? And was not the year of Jubilee proclaimed? Hath the Law no meaning?"

"Like fire is the Law, a good servant but a bad master, my friend Lazarus. But let us not talk of the Law but of the Great Feast. Gorged with pilgrims from all the earth is Jerusalem and this year's Temple business will exceed all bounds. Never did I see so many and strange peoples."

"Even wonder workers—eh, Mary?" Joel said.

Zador Ben Amon looked toward Mary for an answer.

"He speaketh of Jesus of Nazareth, methinks," she replied.

"Who is he?" and he turned to Lazarus.

"A Galilean Rabbi."

"Galilee is not noted for furnishing Rabbis. Hath he been taught in the Temple?"

"Nay. Yet in the Temple teacheth he such wisdom as hath not before been taught by any Rabbi."

"And he works wonders," Martha added.

Zador Ben Amon laughed heartily. "Women believe all things," he said. "There are no wonder workers but sorcerers. Even Eunus, who had the whole Isle of Sicily bewitched, did spit out fire by first putting fire in his mouth. So doeth this Jesus his wonders by Beelzebub—if indeed he doeth them."

As the time for dining drew near, the scent of cooking meat reached the nostrils of Zador. He sniffed and smiled approval, saying, "The savory odor of thy well seasoned meat bringeth to mind the meat and wine of the banquet at which the Roman noblewoman wore the blazing peacock." Again Martha showed keen interest. "In myrrhine and jeweled vases were the wines served and the nightingales' tongues on platters of pure gold," and he watched for the effect of his words.

"Nightingales' tongues!" Mary exclaimed.

"Of a truth. It seemeth past reason that enough of meat so small should be secured to banquet on.

Yet when Rome would banquet, all things are hers. Into far places goeth the fowler with his snare and by the thousand are the fowls of the air sent in, to be burned, save the tongues of them."

The eyes of Mary were fastened on the face of her guest in bewildered amazement. "And you ate nightingales' tongues?" she again exclaimed.

"By the gold plate full. Savory beyond telling was the dish and my appetite was at best."

The eyes of Mary turned from the face of Zador.

"Mary hath three unfeathered ones she spendeth much time feeding," Joel remarked after a short silence. "She would have them grow large."

Zador looked at Mary, leaned his head against a pillow and laughed. "And so our Mary would sup after the manner of Rome. Three nightingales? The tongues of them all will not make a taste!"

A flush tinged Mary's face as she said, "Dost thou think I would nourish the lives of nestlings to pluck from their throats their tongues?" and she cast a straight glance at the reclining man.

"Of what other use are they?" and a mild expression of interest showed on Zador's face.

"Hast thou forgotten the song?"

"Song? Hear the woman, Lazarus, my friend! But a moment ago she did put a value on hearts. Now songs have a value. The heart of a woman

and the song of a bird! Are they worth shekels or talents, my fair Mary?"

"The love of the heart is priceless," she replied, "and there is music of value more than gold talents."

"Are not the silver trumpets of the Temple music enough for thee?"

"Such music is indeed sweet. But there is yet other music."

After Mary had excused herself and gone into the garden a few moments later, Martha said, "She hath gone to feed her nestlings."

"Then will I show you the rare gift I brought thy sister," and from a leather case taken from inside his cloak Zador drew a delicately wrought anklet of gold set thick with shining green chalcedony. From it hung bangles, like bits of fine gold lace, carrying, each in the center, a precious stone of changing color. At sight of it Martha gave an exclamation of delight, and Lazarus and Joel looked at it with interest. "My betrothal gift to Mary," Zador Ben Amon said with undisguised admiration as he turned it about and shook it so that the tinkling of the bangles sounded. "From Ceylon came the garnets and the emerald from Ethiopian mines. When hath man given his betrothed so rich a gift? Proud will thy fair sister be to receive it."

"I would have Mary come," Lazarus said, and

leaving the house, he went into the garden. At the far end Mary was sitting under a glossy green pomegranate which was in full crimson blossom. Clad in white and with her silver bound veil falling softly about her, she made a picture worth pausing a moment to view. She held the nest of young birds in one hand and moved the other slowly over them, until, roused by the wing-like motion, they opened wide their yellow mouths for the food she dropped in. Lazarus watched a moment before seating himself near her. "Mary, my sister," he said, "Zador Ben Amon is an Israelite high and mighty and hath set his heart on thee."

"Nay. Nay," she replied quickly. "He is a heathen and his heart is set on shekels and talents."

"He hath brought thee a betrothal gift."

Mary was silent until she had closed her hand over the crying nestlings. Then she turned to Lazarus. "Dost thou want me to leave thee, my brother?"

"Nay, nay, Mary. Not so. I would keep thee always if thou wouldst. Yet there cometh a time when a woman's heart goeth out to another man than her brother. Thou art different from Martha and setteth much store on things not sold in market places. Let not thy answer come from the mouth of a nightingale. When thy arms grow hungry for little ones and thy breast casts about for him who shall be father to them, Zador Ben Amon—"

Further words were cut short by an exclamation from Mary who drew back in horror.

"What is it?" and Lazarous looked about. "What abominable thing cometh nigh thee?"

For a moment Mary made no reply. With her brother's reference to little ones which should come of her union with the money-changer, she had felt again the passion unspeakable that had for the moment gripped her at touch of the Bedouin baby's lips. Yet as it swept through her now it was the passion of utter revulsion, such passionate revulsion as had stamped itself on her face when her brother looked about for some ugly, creeping reptile. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings cometh wisdom," she seemed to hear the Rabbi say again, and without understanding the mystery of the wisdom, she knew it had come through the mouth of the Bedouin baby. "Not from the mouth of a nightingale shall my answer come," said Mary. "But if thou lovest me, speak no more forever of wedding me with this Jew. It hath been revealed to me there is no wisdom in it."

"He will press the matter with thee. He is a guest under my roof and a Sadducee of power. Choose well thy way."

"I have already made choice. To the home of Anna do I go for the night. She hath called me, for her father is in Jerusalem."

"Is this wisdom?" asked Lazarus thoughtfully.

"It is a favor to Anna, and Zador Ben Amon will not miss a foolish lover of songs when he doth lay hold of Martha's choice meat."

Together Mary and Lazarus walked toward the house. When they reached the big stone bench, Zador stood waiting. Lazarus passed on, and because he insisted, Mary sat beside the Temple money-maker. He put the cloak carefully over the back of the seat and from its folds drew the anklet. Uncovering it, he thrust it suddenly before her, watching eagerly for her first impression.

"What thinkest thou? Is this not a fit betrothal gift for a Roman noblewoman?"

"It is most beautiful," she answered quietly.

"It is thine, my Israelitish princess—my Mary!" he exclaimed with all the interest she had not shown. "Draw up thy skirt for with my own hand would I fit it to thy white and shapely ankle," and his narrow black eyes shone with the anticipated pleasure.

Mary drew away saying, "Nay, nay. I wear no anklets."

"See," and he held it toward her. "Its jewels will tinkle on thy skirt like the silver bells on the High Priest's robe. What soundeth more pleasant to the ears of a woman?"

"But I care not for wagging nose rings and tinkling anklets," she replied.

"And thou wouldst have another gift than this?" Zador asked, his disappointment apparent.

"Nay. No gift would I have. When there is no betrothal what need of a gift?"

Zador Ben Amon turned his eyes on Mary. "No betrothal!" he exclaimed. "No betrothal! Thou dost jest. Where is the woman who would do less than be betrothed to Zador Ben Amon? Take thou the gift. As the price of thy heart was it fashioned and I make my oath that no other woman shall possess it. Here," and he held it toward her. She made no move. He placed it carefully on the wide stone arm of the bench. "There is thy gift and palsied be my arm if my hand toucheth it again. It is thine." And Zador waited for Mary to speak. "Thou dost disturb me much!" And his voice suggested anger when she made no move to take the gift, and arising he went to the pool beside which he stood with bowed head.

After watching him a moment, Mary's hand sought the border of his cloak. Her fingers felt the loose thread in the wide hem. Lifting the anklet, she slipped it inside the hem and pushed it around to one side of the garment.

"On the morrow when he mends the rent he will find that I neither took it nor must his arm suffer palsy for withholding it from me," and she smiled. Then she arose. "Zador Ben Amon," she said, "I go to the home of Anna whose father doth not return from Jerusalem to-night. Farewell."

With a start he turned his face to her. A few

quick steps brought him to her side and he would have thrown his arms about her but she gathered her veil tightly and said, "Touch me not!"

"Touch thee not? Am I a god of wood?" and before she had stepped aside his fingers touched her.

"My brother sitteth just behind the lattice. Wilt thou that I call him?" Zador Ben Amon stopped. Mary cast one swift glance at him. "Devourer of songs unsung," she said slowly, turning her back on him.

He watched her cross the court and pass through the gate into the yard of Simon the Leper. When she was beyond sight he stepped hurriedly back to the bench. He glanced cautiously toward the house. He ran his hand over the stone where he had placed the anklet. He shook his cloak. He dropped on his hands and knees and searched the grass carefully. "The woman hath taken it and I have me no recourse," he muttered angrily. "A curse upon her! But this is not the end of it!"

CHAPTER VIII

STRANGE TALES ARE ABOUT

THE palace occupied by Pilate, Roman Procurator of Judea, during his visitations to the once Jewish capital, was one of the gorgeous and perpetual monuments to the architectural skill of Herod the Great and his almost inconceivable expenditure of gold. Had Pilate built it for himself it could not have been more to his liking, containing as it did apartments in size from the closet of a slave maiden to halls of state large enough to banquet whole companies. The favorite state apartment of Pilate was always first set in order. A palace within a palace was it, pillared into twelve compartments which yet made one whole. The frieze of the twelve compartments was surmounted with the twelve signs of the Zodiac and paintings of meat eaters. The side walls were decorated with fauns and naked bacchantes carrying vases of flowers. The gleaming pillars that reached to a ceiling of great height were entwined with carved ivy and vine branches. There were couches, one of bronze ornamented with tor-

toise shell and gold, the cushions of which were Gallic wool dyed purple; another near it was of ivory and gold and across it was thrown a wolf skin robe. Corinthian vases nobly wrought of fine brass were filled with palms tied with gay ribbons, such as were waved in the Roman circus. Back of the couch covered with wolf skin was a pedestal wreathed with fresh flowers, and the fragrance of incense from cunningly wrought metal lamps perfumed the air.

With the coming of Pilate came a retinue of servants and soldiers, and always guards stood at all entrances inside and out of the palace. In the palace of Pilate all was in readiness for the Passover guests certain to be on hand, for Rome sent many visitors annually to Jerusalem. Claudia, wife of the Procurator, herself enjoyed the impressive crowds that gorged the great city and was out sightseeing daily. On the third day before the great Feast, she returned to the palace before the time of Pilate's arrival, and pushing aside one of the magnificent hangings that lent a touch of barbaric color to the gorgeous apartment, she entered and looked about.

"Margara! Zenobe!" she called. At sound of her voice, from behind another hanging, two slave maidens appeared. "Take thou my cloak, Zenobe," she said, uncovering a splendid gown heavy with spangles of silver and rare lace, "and bring back the jewels that have been under guard since we left

Rome. And thou, Margara, freshen my hair while I sit and rest, for Pilate doth come shortly."

"Aye, Pilate doth come shortly—and for Pilate doth Claudia dress her hair." The words were spoken softly.

"Yea," Claudia said, laughing, "for Pilate doth bring guests from the Senate at Rome. In the court of Cæsar have these men oft dined, and Roman women wear jewels the gods envy. But so hath Claudia jewels, rare jewels that have been handed down to her from her grandfather Augustus and her mother Julia."

Zenobe returned shortly with a closed casket which she handed to Claudia with a key. From it ornaments and strings of jewels were taken and handed to the maid.

"On my arms fasten thy bands and make my throat to sparkle, and when Margara hath dressed my hair, twine it thick with shining stones." Claudia rested herself on the wolf skin couch and as the two slaves dressed her hair and ornamented her body, she talked with them.

"Strange sights I saw in Jerusalem this day. The city is packed with odd peoples from every land. Indian princes saw I from beyond the Ganges. African lion hunters, their black bodies bare save for strings of golden nuggets; Arabians swinging on crimson decked camels; chieftains from Assyria whose purple cloth was gay with blue and yellow

stones; Scythian savages whose garments were no more than suns and moons and fishes marked upon their knees, all these I saw. Aye, strange peoples making a strange show and a strange babel."

"Yea, and strange tales are about," Zenobe half whispered.

"What tales hast thou heard?"

"No more than that the dead are turned to life."

"A strange tale indeed—too strange, my little maid."

"It doth come from a Roman centurion."

"Hath a centurion died?"

"Nay, but his servant, sick unto death, was restored by a wonder worker."

"Whence came this wonder worker?"

"He is a Jew. I know not more, but the centurion telleth it broadly."

"Whence got thou the story?"

"From thy scarred eunuch, my mistress."

"From my scarred eunuch? And where got he the story?"

"I know not save he hath it."

"Call thou my eunuch to me."

With flying feet Zenobe hastened to obey. Meantime Margara finished her work of hair dressing, exclaiming, "Thy hair is most beautiful!"

Claudia arose, arranged the folds of her luxurious train and twisted several strings of jewels over her bare arms. She had started across the shining

mosaic floor when Zenobe returned followed by a large and finely shaped slave with a scarred face. His swarthy body was scantily attired. Claudia gave him recognition, and stopping in front of her he made low obeisance and then stood straight and rigid as a statue.

"To-day," Claudia said, "I stood in the portico of the Tower of Antonio from which watch is kept over the Temple of the Jews, and gazed upon the surging crowds. Saw I all manner of mankind from infants to giants, black, brown, red and Roman, and of every kind methought. Yet doth my maiden tell me there is one I have not seen—a wonder worker that is a Jew. Hast thou heard aught of this?"

"Yea. A wonder worker is Jesus of Nazareth."

"Never did I hear his name. Whence came the Jew?"

"From Galilee. There liveth the centurion who told of him."

"Galilee? Galilee? It is somewhere I know not of. Whence got thou the story?"

"A slave of the centurion chanced to be in thy palace garden. He did tell much."

"How went the story?"

"The servant of the centurion was ill unto death. The Jew did turn death to life. To turn mourning into joy, they say, hath he come into the world."

"To turn mourning into joy. A glad mission. Hast thou heard aught else?"

"The centurion's slave did tell much."

"What?"

"That the Jews are a strange people. Long before thy mighty Rome was dreamed of by the gods, most noble mistress, was the Kingdom of the Jews great. In this same Jerusalem was there a temple of pure gold which did throw back the sun itself into the sun's face for brightness. And a king sat on a throne of gold. Wealth had this king surpassing that of every nation, and wisdom had he so that among the wise of all the earth none had such wisdom. Also, had this great people seers and prophets from whose eyes the veil of time was lifted so that clear as noonday did their vision behold that which was to be. And, lo, most noble mistress, out of the mouths of three soothsayers hath a prophecy been recorded of a king who shall restore again the throne of their glory. This do the Jews believe, aye, as they believe in sun and air. And it is whispered, most noble mistress, that this wonder worker from Galilee is the long looked for king. Ah, that his kingdom might come!"

"What mattereth his kingdom to thee?"

"It doth hold promise of liberty to those in bondage and freedom to those sore wounded. It would let men be free, as Rome doth not. Such a king

would be a *saviour*, and I would love him, even as I hate Rome!"

"As thou hatest Rome? Fear'st thou not to speak thus?"

The eunuch moved a step nearer Claudia and threw back his shoulders, exclaiming, "What have I to fear at the hand of Rome? Nothing save my life hath Rome left me, and this I scorn. By sword or cross or ravening beast may Rome take my life and I would smile in her face. Ah, have I not sore scars to speak my hatred? Here"—and he drew his finger over a long scar on his face—"here is where the sword of Rome lay open my face, yea, wide open as the lips of a crying child. And on my back, most noble mistress, thou mightest hide thy white fingers in the welts cut by the stinging thong. And seest thou my arm? Here is flesh cooked sere as the shell of a tortoise. Thus have blade and thong and branding iron of Rome marked me with wounds and commanded my lips to silence. Yet have these scars each one a thousand silent tongues crying ever 'Hate! Hate! Hate!' But here," and he threw back his tunic and placed three fingers over a scar on his breast, "here is a scar I love. My life it is—my satisfaction—my victory over Rome which Rome hath no power to take. Aye, the victory of this scar, most noble mistress, Rome with her armies, her spears, her torch nor her power of stretching writhing bodies on hewn trees, hath

no power to take! In this I glory! This is my victory and sweet is the scar to the heart of thy scarred eunuch."

Claudia moved near the slave and looked closer at the scar. "It doth lie snugly near thy heart," she said. "Thou art a strange scarred eunuch to call such a one sweet—aye, to call a wound in thy flesh a victory."

"There is a story, most noble mistress."

"My scarred eunuch hath a story? I have thought so since Pilate made thee mine."

"Yea, a story. Would that my lips might tell into the ear of the noble Claudia the story of the scar thy late-bought slave doth bear."

"There is yet time before Pilate cometh. Tell on."

CHAPTER IX

SWEET IS THE SCAR

"WHERE the blue Ægean washes the shores of sunny Thrace," the eunuch began, with a far-away look in his eye. "Yea, in the land of Sparticus, that bravest of all fighters for the freedom of mankind, there lived my people and there lived I save when to gain knowledge I attended the schools of Greece. Fields had my people where the vine hung purple as the sky at midnight and grain did we garner golden as the belly of the tiger hide beside our hearthstones. Rich was my father's house in fields, and rich were his sons in wine and stores and flocks. Golden were my arms with cunningly wrought bracelets and around my neck hung gems from far lands.

"But richer than purple wine, or golden bands, or jewels, was the look of her whom I loved. White were the arms she hung around my neck, as milk and ivory. Pink like the first flush of the morning were the cheeks my lips pressed. Dark was her hair and soft like smoke in the evening, and her

eyes shone like stars on the bosom of the sea. Blue as the summer sky were the veins that lay like tender lace over her virgin bosom. Her breath was fragrant like flowers behind damp stones and sweet was her voice as the music of waves when rainbow foam kisses rainbow foam and is lost in one embrace. And she was mine; and I was hers and a cot at the foot of a violet hill was ours.

"The sun shone. The breezes blew. The flowers bloomed. The clusters hung purple. The grain stood golden. And then—aye, then came Rome—Rome the scourge! Rome the curse! Rome the wolf! With fire, sword, rapine, murder—came Rome! When the invading army crossed the bounds we took refuge in a walled city. Soon we were surrounded by a forest of glittering spears. I was an archer on the wall, and we showered the brutes that hid under the bristling steel. But their shields made a phalanx which did toss back our arrows as a bull tosses stubble. Against the wall did they hurl mighty stones which did come with fierce fury, and with a great beam did they batter our walls as a ram doth batter a thin hedge. For days did we withstand. I fought with mad fierceness, for she whom I loved cheered me from beneath the wall.

"Then did the enemy without the city throw balls of burning pitch. Our men did fight the fire until their hands were blistered, yet came those balls of fire. And when flames were consuming us, the

gates of the city were broken and the hand of Rome did have us in its power. With many of my fellows was I taken away and made fast to a great tree near by the tent where a Roman chieftain did collect spoil. Of the lithe of limb who were taken captive, some were to be made gladiators, but the fierce screams of others of my countrymen, mingled with Roman curses, told of a more ignominious fate than the arena. For this was I marked. Fierce was the passion of my bosom that my heritage of the gods should be sacrificed on the bloody edge of a Roman knife. While yet I stood chained did my eye catch a sight that did freeze my boiling blood fast in my veins, steep my breath in curses and turn my vision to mad blackness, for into the tent of the Roman chief I saw her carried whom I loved—she who was mine.

"I tore at the chain until blood did ooze from my flesh. Aye, and the gods did see my plight. My weapons had the hand of Rome taken save a knife hid in my tunic. Shortly was I to be taken to the chief to be robbed of my armlets. Then did all the gods show me favor, for as I went into the tent the chief was called out. Save for the time an eye doth twinkle was he called out. Yet I rushed behind the curtains which did hide the maiden. Swift were my words as the falcon flies and gleaming was my blade in my hand ere the words did pass my lips. And swift as light falls, bared she her bosom, and

here, on the spot where we had dreamed a little head would lie which should be ours, I drove the keen blade in deep—deep drove I the blade, kissing her lips. And she did laugh—laugh like a happy child and press her lips to mine. I drew the dagger dripping red from the heart of my Thracian love and stuck it to my bosom bidding her strike it hard. But the stroke fell short. Even as the first blood met the blade was I struck low by the sword of Rome which lay open my face. Aye, seest thou? Seest thou the face of thy slave? And when he beheld blood bubbling from my face and pumping from my breast, did the Roman chieftain laugh.

"Aye, how Rome doth love blood! Rivers of blood! Seas of blood! With the blood of my face dripping on to the blood of my breast I looked into the face of him who had laughed at my blood, and I did laugh—laugh in the face of Rome and shout with victorious shouting, 'My blood may'st thou have! Aye, from a thousand wounds may thou steal it—shout over it—drink it, if thou wilt! But never shall the hand of Rome pollute her whom I loved! Never shall the feverish lips of thy foul lust stain her sweet breathing!' Again did the chieftain smite me across the head, and darkness came. When I awoke blood was there from a third wound, yea, most noble mistress, that wound which did rob me of man's most sacred possession. Yet again did I laugh in the face of Rome, laugh with the joy of

a victor and praise the gods, for around the neck of him who had smitten me would never twine the ivory arms of her I loved. Neither would the hand that had made me a thing of wood, caress the blue veined breast of her who was mine. For this I love the scar! Sweet is the scar, most noble mistress, of thy eunuch's sore scarred love! Sweet is the scar!"

During the recital of her slave's tragic story, Claudia had shown much interest. "Is there more?" she asked, when he paused.

"Yea, that which doth delight the heart of Rome —the Triumph. When as captives we first saw Rome, great was the rejoicing in the city whose sword rules the world. With garlands were the buildings gay. The streets were strewn with flowers, and the populace was robed in white. The victor came in a golden chariot with its four white horses and its stately lictors. Proud was he in purple robe and crown of laurel and he smiled as the trumpet tones of the heralds rang out and the populace shouted praise in thunderous tones. With the captives and the spoils of war came I, chained, and the rabble did shout in my face. So also did my heart shout. For far from the marble courts and gilded palaces that hid the polluted couches of helpless maidens, she who was mine rested in the dust of Thrace with the winds of the Ægean sobbing where she lay. And as these desecrators did exult, so did

my heart thank the gods for the steel of my blade, the strength of my arm and the pale dead face of my love! Most noble mistress, I have done. Dost thou understand?"

"I understand thou hast been cruelly robbed," she answered.

"Yet have I not been robbed of that which maketh a man to think."

"Hast thou thoughts? What is the wisdom of thy thinking?"

"On the shores of the sea have I seen the storm make mountains of water, yet the depths were not moved from their holdings. Down from the mountains hath the wind raged and hath fought me for my mantle, which ever I held tighter. From the hand of Rome comes the sword which doth scar and rob and pollute. Yet it doth not subdue."

"This thou hast observed. What meaning hath it?"

"Even this. What the storm can not do with much thundering, the tide doeth at will. What the wind can not do with loud battling, the sun doeth in silence. What the sword can not do though blood be spilled like water, the mind of man can accomplish."

"Thou speakest wisdom. But how doth this put a light on thy scarred face?"

"A vision hath been given of a kingdom greater than that of Cæsar's, wherein the bruised and beaten

and scarred who toil and starve that idlers may gorge, shall be accounted greater than those who rule by the might of the sword."

Claudia crossed and recrossed the room several times after the slave spoke these words, the silence unbroken save by the tinkle of her strings of ornaments. Pausing before him she said, "As the tide is greater than the storm; as the sun is greater than the wind; as the mind of man is greater than the sword, so shall there be a kingdom greater than that of Cæsar? Is this what thou sayest?"

"Not I, but the Jew that teacheth in the Temple."

"Hast heard this from his own lips?"

"Thou knowest I have not. Save as the centurion's slave hath spoken know I nothing."

Claudia bent toward the slave, so near the jewels swinging from her shoulders lay on his arm, as she whispered, "Wouldst thou hear the Jew?"

"Ah, that I might—that I might," and the sad eyes of the eunuch filled with tears.

"Thou hast my permission. Nay, even more, it is my command. Go thou daily to the Temple of the Jews and bring me word."

"Be it permitted a slave of Rome to enter the Temple of the Jews? Sweet is one scar, but there are no others like it."

"The Tower of Antonio stands guard against the Temple and behind its frowning walls hides the arm of Rome. Into one court thou art permitted to

go. Here if any say thee nay, reply thou, 'I am the property of Claudia, wife of Pilate.' "

"Thy kindness doth make my heart glad. With rejoicing will I go and come again to thee with the wisdom of the Jew."

"Keep thou thy ears open and thy mouth shut. Understandest thou? Go now. Bring wreaths of flowers. Thy master, Pilate, will soon come with Roman Senators."

CHAPTER X

I WOULD SEE JESUS

THE busy days immediately preceding the Passover had gone, and on the eve of the New Year the hush of expectancy brooded over Jerusalem. The family of Lazarus, at the time of the evening meal, awaited the coming of Joseph of Arimathea who was to spend the night with them and with Lazarus go to offer his sacrifice on the next day. The rays of the setting sun shone through the big lattice window and fell across the table.

"Look at those clouds of flame!" Mary exclaimed. "Lazarus—Joel—hast thou ever seen aught more gorgeous? In my garden I have a lily red like the sky. In honor of our guest I shall pluck it."

"Unless he tippeth it over Joseph will not see Mary's red lily," Joel said as she left the room.

"Where is Mary?" Martha called from the kitchen a moment later.

"Gone to the garden to pluck a red lily," called Joel in answer.

Martha appeared in the doorway. "Already," she complained, "hath she plucked lilies when she should have been plucking sparrows. Now she is gone again and preparation there be yet to make before we sup. Mary! Mary!" she called, turning toward the court door. When her sister entered a moment later, Martha said, "Thou dost leave me to do much service. Fix thou the cushions at the head of the table where our guest of honor will be seated."

"Yea, my sister," Mary answered, as she arranged her choice lily in a vase and put it near the place of the guest.

"Hurry, Mary," Martha urged. "The sun is down, soon will our guest appear, and he is rich. Lazarus doth say the richest man in Arimathea."

"Content would I be with half his possessions," observed Joel.

"To-day in the Temple I did see him," Lazarus said. "He too is given to the wisdom of the Galilean Prophet."

"A member of the Great Sanhedrin taken with strange teachings!" Joel exclaimed in surprise.

"Elizabeth hath declared him the Messiah," Mary said thoughtfully.

"Women are given to vain words," was Joel's answer. "It is said this Galilean Prophet is no prophet at all, but the son of a carpenter in a poverty-ridden fishing town."

Lazarus reflected a moment before saying, "I know not from whence the King of the Jews shall come to restore again the throne of David, but if this Jesus is he, and need wealth, mine shall he have."

"Thou wouldst give to him but not to the poor? A great head hast thou for business, my friend Lazarus!" and Joel laughed.

"Aye, but for the establishment of the Kingdom, what man of Israel would not give of his riches, even of his life?"

Further conversation was stopped by a knocking at the door. Hastening to answer it, Lazarus opened to Joseph of Arimathea. He wore the rich Sanhedrin robe of silk and Egyptian linen heavily embroidered and his phylacteries were bound on his forehead with wide soft thongs. His tall and stately bearing, his flowing beard and official dress gave him dignity that impressed even Eli who rendered him the usual courtesies with alacrity. "Late I am," he said as the servant unloosed his sandals, "but the highway is thronged with pilgrims getting in for to-morrow's celebration."

"Glad we are that of all the guests, thou comest to sup under our roof. Meat is ready. Come, let us to the table."

With Joseph at the head of the table, Mary by Lazarus and Martha by Joel, the meal began. Eli passed bowls of water for the washing of hands.

Grace was said and then after a second hand cleansing, wine was poured and thanks said over the cups, after which came the meat, and as they ate they talked.

"About the Galilean Prophet were we speaking," Lazarus said.

"The young Rabbi is much in the mouths of both Temple scribes and pilgrims in the street. Some have praise for his words of wisdom. Others, stung ofttimes by his rebukes, attack him cunningly. The way in which he doth answer those who would entangle him doth please me. To-day in the Temple he was cleverly attacked by some Pharisees who drew the attention of a crowd by accusing him of having such speech with a publican and a harlot as the Law doth not allow. With few words did he tell of a man who had two sons. To the one did he say, 'Son, wilt thou do a service for thy father?' and the son said, 'Nay.' To the other, the man did say, 'Son, wilt thou do a service for thy father?' and the son did answer, 'Yea.' And when came time to take account of the service, lo, the son that had said, 'Nay' had performed the service, while he who had said 'Yea' had done no service. This did the Galilean Prophet tell in the ears of the crowd for the Pharisees who had accused him. And then did he say to them, 'I say unto thee, the publicans and harlots shall enter the Kingdom before thou dost!'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lazarus with pleasure.

"The man pleaseth me. When hath a Rabbi spoken such wisdom or possessed such powers of discernment?"

"Are there many in the Sanhedrin who harken to the teachings of this Jesus?" Joel asked.

"Beside myself none, save Nicodemus who did go to him by night. Aye, and it was a hard saying the ears of Nicodemus did hear, for when the Ruler asked what he should do to be saved, the Galilean told him, 'Thou must be born again.'"

"Born again? A man be *born* again—and thou dost call such speaking wisdom?" It was Joel who asked the question.

"The young Rabbi made clear that the birth he teaches is not of flesh, but entereth in like the blowing of the wind, and hath to do with the spirit of man."

"Herein is mystery," Lazarus observed with perplexed face. "I understand not this being born again. Mary, thou dost spend much time studying the mysteries of life as it doth appear to thee in living things. Understandest thou how to be born again?"

"I understand not," Mary answered. "Yet the miracle I have seen. Once did I plant in the soil a root, brown like a dead leaf and wrinkled like a hag's face. It hath been born again. Lo—here it is," and she took the red lily from the vase by Joseph's cup. "See its glad color? Smell its rare

fragrance? Here is a miracle, for this that is beautiful, is only a changed form of that which was uncomely. A miracle—yet the secret be with Jehovah God. Mayhap the heart of Nicodemus was brown and wrinkled with much tradition and useless custom until the words of wisdom Joseph doth speak of, seemed but foolishness. And lo! A change did come and he findeth Truth in the words of the Galilean Rabbi. Thus would he be born again. The miracle thou mightest see, but the manner of its doing is hidden in the heart of Jehovah."

During Mary's explanation of a miracle the eyes of Joseph had been drawn to her in surprise and admiration. "Thou hast well spoken," he said. "Hast thou heard the words of this young Rabbi whose wisdom is old?"

"Nay, Father Joseph. Yet would I."

"Thou wouldst learn much at his feet."

"But knowest thou not it is forbidden by the Law that a woman be taught that which the Rabbis would withhold?"

"I forget not. Yet will the Galilean teach thee."

"And glad of a chance, methinks, will he be to break the Law," said Joel, "for doth he not think himself better than the Law?"

"Say rather 'greater' than the Law," Joseph replied. "As a prop to a vine, so is the Law to the weak. But as the vine doth grow greater than the prop, because of what the prop hath been to it, is it

able to stand in its own strength. So there are prophets who have outgrown the Law. For such, to live within the Law would be putting new wine in old bottles."

"Much hath been said of this man," Martha observed, "but none hath yet told of his garments. What sort are they?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lazarus. "Martha doth think perchance she may help Joel sell a new garment."

"Thou dost make merry over a straight question. Doth not the Law teach that man is the glory of God, and the glory of man is his dress?"

"And methinks thou knoweth also the saying, 'The dress of the wife of a learned man is of more importance than the life of one ignorant.' Hear, Joel, thou learned man?"

"Affright not Joel," Martha replied to her brother, "but tell me whether the *kittuna* of this Rabbi is wool or flax, or his *tallith* handsomely embroidered."

"What weareth this man?" Lazarus asked of Joseph.

"Save for the phylacteries, the plain raiment of a Rabbi with the white and lavender fringes on his *tallith* as the Law doth command. Yet it is said he hath appeared in the white of the Essenes."

"What matter the color of his fringes?" Mary

asked. "His words would I hear. Perhaps I should love him even as Lazarus loveth him."

"And thy gentleness, and strange wisdom for a woman, will win for thee his love, methinks," Joseph answered.

"Mary is not so gentle as thou thinkest," and Martha laughed. "Elizabeth did visit in the home of Jesus when he was a little lad. Of all she did tell concerning him, that which did most delight the heart of Mary was the tale of a bloody nose he did give another lad."

"How went the tale?" and rubbing the beard around a mouth shaped for laughter, Lazarus awaited a reply.

"He did act," promptly answered Mary, "because a large coward did pluck the hair of a small child which could do naught but weep. Unafraid souls my heart loves."

"Ever hath womankind loved bravery," Joseph remarked. "Well, the Galilean Rabbi is brave, Mary."

"How brave?"

"Brave sufficient to dare the wrath of the High Priest. Is this not bravery?"

"Rather the act of a fool," Joel answered.

When they had tarried about the table until a late hour, the guests went to their couches.

"To-morrow is the birthday of Israel," Lazarus

said after the door had closed behind Joel and Joseph. "Now must the house be searched for leaven that not a speck remain."

Taking up the lamps which were burning low on the table, he fastened them to long handles. Martha, taking one of them, went to the kitchen, while Mary and Lazarus made search in the larger room.

"My brother," Mary said when the last cushion had been shaken and the last corner searched, "on this eve of Israel's birthday I have a request of thee. Wilt thou be Ahasuerus and hold to me thy golden scepter?"

"What is the request of thy heart, my sister?"

"My heart is burdened with a desire to meet this unafraid yet tender and wise man thou dost talk of. I would see Jesus."

"It shall be even so. To our home shall he be bidden. When thou hearest the silver trumpets blowing in the New Year, remember this is thy brother's promise, and may joy come to thee with the coming of the Galilean."

"Thou dost give me joy on this New Year's Eve. A kiss I have for thee—for pleasant dreams."

"Now am I well paid," laughed Lazarus when his sister kissed him.

"The blessing of God on thee, my brother. Good night."

CHAPTER XI

ON WITH THE DANCE

WHILE Lazarus and Mary were searching the house with their long-handled lamps that not a speck of leaven should remain to defile the Passover, a different scene was being enacted in the Palace of Herod for Pilate and his guests. Earlier in the evening the Procurator had entered his luxurious apartment and casting aside his purple robe had exclaimed, "The wrath of Jove on Jerusalem. Save for its size it is not better than a tomb across Kedron!"

"A tomb?" one of his guests repeated questioningly. "Methinks it is a mountain of bees swarming and buzzing. Never have I seen such crowds."

"People, yea, *people*. But what are people if they be Jews? The tombs lack not a plentiful filling of bones and creeping things."

"When thy stomach hath become a tomb for a cup of red wine, then will Jerusalem be more to thy liking," Claudia said, and turning to the guest added, "My lord Pilate doth love Rome much when he is in Jerusalem."

"Yet even Jerusalem doth seem to be getting Romanized, with her hippodrome and her trophies of Augustan victories. Also, there is a statue of Caligula, and the golden eagle hangs its wings over the Temple gate itself, while Antonio commands all."

"Yea," assented Pilate, "there are a few images and theatres, but the atmosphere is heavy with religion—barbarous superstition, as hath Cicero said. And fools they are for they worship the unseen. Greeks, Egyptians, Asiatics, Romans all have gods, but these dish-faced ones with beards refuse to pay honor to Cæsar and scorn the gods."

"True," the guest replied, "but if there were no Jew, the wit of the theatre would suffer. Doth not the wag ever make merry concerning the god of the Jew which refuseth to be a god unless an inch of skin be taken where the eye misseth it not?"

Pilate joined his guests in hearty laughter. "And their ancestral veneration of the swine, what meaneth it?"

"Perhaps they fear more than venerate the swine."

"Of that I know not, but much fasting doth make them lean enough to thank the gods for the fat of a swine."

"They are loyal to their god—whatever it is," Claudia said.

"Yea, in dimly lighted synagogues they ever gather, muttering prayers. Even do they close their shops one day that they may have more time for more prayers."

"It hath come to my ears that they neither eat nor sleep with strangers," one of the guests observed.

"In the valley of Gehenna where the stench of their funeral fires doth ever ascend and the worm ceaseth not to wiggle in corruption, there would the circumcized rather lie like a dog, than sup with one uncircumcized. Aye, a dog is the Jew, and a thief."

"Yet have I heard that they contend to the death for their Law. Doth it not deal with stealing?" Pilate was asked.

"Yea, it dealeth with stealing and for it they contend. Yet they are thieves beginning with Annas the High Priest. Into the Temple offices hath he put all his sons and nephews and kinsmen that through them his itching fingers may possess all the wealth of the Temple. The Law of the Jews is for others than those who make it, preach it, sell it or trade in it. Yet for all their sins have these long-faced robbers a scapegoat. Over his head do they mumble their sins and then frighten him away to the wilderness. And when he is departed, lo, they are as innocent as babes new-born. Jove, what fools!"

"Here now are thy spirits coming," Claudia

laughed. "Drink thou and see if thou gettest not out of the tomb."

Servants with viands and wines entered and placed them on tables near the couches. Pilate poured for the guests and then took his own cup.

"Pilate takes a second cup," said Claudia. "He is moving out of the tomb."

"Antipas hath not found his Tiberias a tomb yet," Pilate remarked between cups.

"What hath he done?" a guest asked.

"To a maiden who pleased him with gay dancing gave he the head of a Jew prophet in a silver platter. Good use for such head."

"In seven veils did she dance," Claudia added.

"On my soul I would have seen the show."

"My lord Pilate emerges from the tomb," and Claudia laughed as he poured another cup.

"And for a purpose," Pilate answered her. "As Antipas hath taken the pleasures of Rome to Tiberias, so will Pilate bring Rome to Jerusalem this night for the pleasure of his guests. Where, Claudia, my love, is thy maiden whose limbs are like the milky marble Greece boasts and whose feet fly like the wings of a chased butterfly? Summon thou the slave. Yet stay—not seven veils shall hide her marble loveliness. Here," and snatching a wreath of flowers from a pedestal he flung them to Claudia, "bid her robe her beauteous nakedness in this. Here's to the dancer whose virgin charms unhidden

by such dense and senseless draperies as veils, shall set our blood racing as blood doth race at Rome. Bid the slave come!"

"My maiden doth not choose to come clad only in a wreath," and Claudia tossed the flowers aside.

"Slaves have no choice when masters do the bidding."

"Thy words sound large, yet hath Claudia a choice for her maiden. Confusion will take the buoyancy from her supple limbs, and so drawn will her arms be to her face to hide its shame, that the sensuous swing thou dost desire will be stiff as the scabbard on thy wall. Lest she be veiled my maiden can not dance to do Rome pleasure."

"A veil! A veil!" shouted Pilate, laughing.

"Give the maiden a veil," the guests added.

"A veil! One veil—*one* but not *two,* Claudia. One veil!" and again Pilate laughed loudly.

"A veil. *One* veil," Claudia repeated, bowing as she left the room.

When she had gone Pilate summoned servants. "Set the palms to make a garden," he commanded. "Call the torch-bearers and make of them a flaming pathway. Summon the musicians. Let there be haste!"

In a very short time the palm grove was in order and a blast of music sounded. Claudia returned

smiling, and all eyes turned to the curtained entrance at the far end of the aisle of palms. The first glimpse of the little Greek slave was that of a fairy dancing into the shadowy background. Her white and shapely body sparkled as if powdered with diamond dust and the veil that floated about her was woven of fine and shining threads in rainbow tints. For a time she flitted up and down between the palms and rows of torch-light bearers standing like purple statues, while Pilate and the guests drank to her grace and beauty and cheered her skill. At a signal from the Procurator the dancing stopped. "Thus doth Greece show her grace," he said to his guests. "Now wouldst thou see Rome dance?"

"Yea—but Rome is not Greece in the art."

"Bid thy eunuch to come," Pilate said, addressing Claudia.

Without asking questions, for Pilate was growing too merry with wine to answer them, Claudia summoned her slave.

"Come hither, thou scar-ridden eunuch!" Pilate shouted as he entered the place. "Wrap thy broad back in this wolf hide and take thou a helmet and spear—so! Now, musicians, pipe thee a tune that will be wild like the wrath of the gods. No music now to make a butterfly flit, but thunder for the beast that maketh the earth tremble. Ready! On with the dance!"

The big slave cast a glance of appeal at his mistress, but she motioned him to obey. Then the eunuch, wrapped in the great wolf robe, danced, heavy and without grace.

"Stay!" Pilate called. "Ye gods! Rome was not built to dance. Thy legs are like tree trunks, thy back like a ship. To gain possession of Greece, this is Rome's glory. Rome, pursue thou Greece. Tantalize her as doth a cat torment a mouse. Aye, now, slave girl, take to yonder forest of palms and elude him who follows, for the wolf of Rome is on thy track. And thou, oh, Rome, dog thy fair prey, as the sword of Cæsar doth dog that which it would possess. Away to the woods! Fly, Greece, fly! On with the dance!"

To weird music the girl began an elusive dance in and out among the palms but ever under the moving glare of a flaming torch. The eunuch, like some shaggy monster, doggedly followed her. After some minutes of this dancing-chase, Pilate cried, "This is but play! Rome by the strength in his arms can pick Greece away from the earth. Come thou, Rome and Greece, dance *close!* Greece—evade the powerful arm that seeks to draw thee beneath the wolf's tawny hide! Dance! Dance! Dance away from Rome! Harder! Faster! Fiercer! He comes nearer! His hand doth touch thee. Aye—watch! He comes closer. Hear his heart thump with eagerness to seize thee? Feel his hot breath?

He is about to seize thee! He taketh thee, Greece! Thou art disappearing under the hide of the wolf!"

As the wild dance neared its end, Pilate became so aroused he rushed back and forth across the room in imitation of first one dancer then the other, while his guests roared with laughter. And when the eunuch seized the slave girl and gathered her under the thick fur, her screams were those of honest fear for she knew not what might be in store for her. "Scream—scream again!" shouted Pilate. "I like it. Aye, to the heart of Rome stifled by the pious air of Jerusalem, screaming is like new wine! Scream once again!" Again the slave girl's cry was heard from under the wolf hide. "Thou doest well. Come forth and from the golden cup of Pontius Pilate, held in his own hand, shalt thou drink. Aye, thou doest well," he repeated as she came toward him. "To the heart of Rome screams are dear. Here's to thy screaming, and here's to Rome forever!" and he lifted the cup.

"Stay thy hand a moment," and Claudia touched the sleeve of Pilate lightly as she spoke.

"What meanest thou?"

"Drink thou to Rome, my lord—but *not* Rome *forever.*"

"What meanest thou?" he repeated.

"In days long gone before Romulus had found the lair of the she-wolf, there lived seers who fore-

told a king whose kingdom would be greater than that of Cæsar."

"Claudia hath been filching cups, methinks," Pilate said, joining in the laughter of the Senators. "Another king than Cæsar? As the mighty Tiberius would do to a worm that should raise its head from the dust to sting his heel, so will the mighty Cæsar do to him whose voice be lifted against the empire. My fair Claudia, thy brain is addled. Here's to thee, my love, here's to our guests, the Senators, and here's to Rome—*Rome forever!* On with the dance!"

CHAPTER XII

ON THE ROOF

THE Day of Atonement had just passed and throughout Palestine great preparations were being made for the Feast of Tabernacles, for the harvest yield had been rich. Beginning with the fruits of the oleaster and white mulberry in the early season, the ingathering of wheat, of almonds and Beyrout honey, of apples and apricots and corn, of grapes and of figs, of maize and of pomegranates and dates, of olives and walnuts, had taken place as the months passed, and now from the northern bounds of Galilee to the southern edge of Judea and from Peræa to the sea, pilgrims were ready to set forth with their first-fruits to be offered in the Temple. The vineyards and olive orchards of Lazarus had yielded bountifully, and the laborers had been accounted worthy of their hire and generously paid.

Martha had been busy putting in her store of corn and wine and now, late on the last day before Atonement was counting her pig skin bottles while Eli cleaned the ashes from the big earthenware oven. "Hath Mary carried the last of her boughs to the

housetop?" she questioned, glancing into the court. And without waiting for an answer she continued, "Such a pile of myrtle and olive and palm branches as hath not before been used in an arbor hath Mary dragged up the steps, and made into a bower. Anna doth build her bower in the garden, but not so my sister who will have hers set where she can sit under its roof of leaves and look out over the hills where there are a thousand booths. And with her harp she sings. Listen—but Eli, there is a new skin bottle missing!" and grave concern was in Martha's voice.

"My beloved is mine and I am his
Until the daybreak and the shadows flee away."

The words floated gently out on the air from the housetop. The voice was that of Mary.

"Mary—Mary!" called Martha. "A new pigskin bottle is missing." And she started toward the stair steps. Hearing no answer she hurried upward calling, "Mary, Mary, canst thou not hear?"

"Many waters can not quench love.
Neither can the floods drown it,
For love is strong as death—"

Mary sang, lightly touching the strings of her harp as she sat under her bower of myrtle and palm.

"Mary, a new skin bottle is missing!" the housewife shouted in her sister's ear, "and the foolishness thou singeth doth make thee deaf."

"'Foolishness,' thou sayest? Once, to me also the beauty of it were hidden. But now—listen, Martha—

"I sat under his shade with great delight
And his fruit was sweet
He brought me into his banqueting house
And his banner over me was love.

Since the Master hath come it seemeth clear. Is not his wisdom a banquet? Are not the wondrous beauty of his words and the tones of his voice like sweetest fruit and is not his banner of love over us?"

"That shouldst thou know, for since the first time he crossed our threshold thou hast made thy dwelling place at his feet. And his banner of love methinks is large enough for all sorts of women to find place under, even such kind as would pollute thee by a touch."

"What meanest thou, Martha?"

"No more than I did say. Did not Joel attend a feast where Jesus had been bidden? And lo, as they sat at meat did not a woman make her way to the feet of Jesus and there sit—aye, a woman of the town? And did he not look into her eyes when she was spoken harshly to, even as he looketh into thine? And did he not say comforting words to her and excuse her, saying she had loved much—aye, loved even to her own damnation?"

"For this alone could I love Jesus," Mary answered, "even this—he pities womankind, nor

thrusts them beyond the circle of his kindness because they have been weak. Not of evil cometh woman's confidence, which, betrayed, maketh her an outcast. But of goodness cometh confidence."

"Thy speech soundeth well, but it stirreth not mercy in my heart for she who sins against the Law."

"Hard and often cruel is the Law. Dost thou ever think, Martha, that in the sight of God, to sin against love may be a greater sin than to sin against the Law?"

"I know not the meaning of thy question. Dost think I am a Rabbi?"

"Thou hast a right to think on these things even if thou art not a Rabbi."

"Nay—no right have I, for doth not the Law say a woman shall not be taught?"

"What the Law denieth, the Master doth allow. Doth he not ever bid me sit at his feet and learn?"

"Far be it from me," Martha said, "to say aught against the teachings of the Master, yet a woman's place is not with Rabbis. To serve is her lot."

"Methinks thou didst make this speech once to Jesus."

"Yea," Martha answered, "and thou needst not remind me he said thou hadst chosen the better part. Yet have I noticed that neither thy desire for wisdom, nor his for imparting it, did satisfy his belly.

Even as Lazarus and Joel, doth he take his meat and wine."

Voices in the garden announced the coming of Lazarus and Joel. Martha leaned over the parapet and called, "A new skin bottle is missing."

"Hath it been stolen?" Joel asked.

"I greatly fear it hath," she replied anxiously.

When they came out upon the housetop, Lazarus said in a voice of emotion, "Alas—woe be upon us. Yea, misery hath fallen to our lot. Ah, that my soul should have lived to see this evil hour!"

"What hath happened?" Mary asked, resting the fingers that had been lightly touching the harp strings. "Hath evil tidings?"

"Alas that this should have fallen upon this household. Canst thou, Mary, sustain the grief of thy sister while I do break the evil tidings?"

"Thou dost distress my soul!" Martha exclaimed. "Speak."

"A new skin bottle is missing," Lazarus solemnly declared.

After the laughter which followed, Martha said, "Thou, Lazarus, and thy sister Mary would both starve had not our father saved his mites. Doth not our own Solomon teach of the saving ways of the ant?"

"The words of the Galilean Rabbi mean more to Mary than the wisdom of Solomon," Joel observed.

"The son of David," Mary answered, "was not his heart led of strange women?"

"Cast not blame on him," Joel said. "Snared he was by the daughters of Baal as was our father Adam tempted of Eve."

"Man is queer. Ever he doth boast of being strong, yet doth he ever likewise boast of being led astray," reflected Mary.

"Joel," Lazarus asked, "how camest thou in the net of Martha? Didst thou walk in, or wert thou dragged?'

"I did walk," Joel answered, laughing. "But Martha is not like other women."

"And I did prepare the way for his walking, for much did my heart desire a man with such beard," Martha confessed.

"Martha's heart hath been drawn out by a man's beard. What drew thy heart when first thou set eyes on the Master?" and Lazarus turned to Mary. "Thou shouldst have seen her, Joel," he continued. "Long had we waited in the Temple for a sight of him and we had turned on to the porch when Mary did look back. Then her feet stopped as if turned to salt and in my ear she did whisper, with undue excitement, 'Look! Look! Is that Jesus?' And I did look. And behold, the Master stood with a small child in his arms. Then did Mary refuse to move forward, but established her feet on the stones of the portico and with her hands on my shoulders

did she lean that she might see the man. And while she did thus lean, he raised his eyes from the face of the child in his arms and looked straight at Mary. Dost thou remember, Mary?"

"Some things the heart can not forget," Mary answered, resting her head against her harp. "Never will I forget the Master as I saw him first. Against a white marble pillar carved with lilies he stood. Behind him, high against the line made by the portico roof, was the blue, blue sky— bending as it touched the purple mountains and the green and silver olive hills. Straight and strong he stood, and the little one did look into his face as if there it saw its future. One of its hands lay on Jesus' cheek and the other was close hidden in his large hand. When the child stroked the face of the man and smiled, the man kissed it, rested his hand upon its head a moment in blessing and gave it to its mother. Will I forget? No, never!"

"And when he did put the child down," Lazarus said, "lo, he did turn his face toward Mary. Twice had I asked him to be my guest, yet had his heart not given assent. Now he came. Over Olivet we made our way in the sunset, and on the brow of the hill we stopped to look back, and Mary's tongue did lend her voice to praise the Temple."

"Yea, my brother. Was ever Jerusalem so holy as that night, or the Temple so glorious? From the gathering shadows of the deep valleys the hand of

God had placed about it, rose Zion like a towering island of gold and snow, rearing its shining lines against a burnished crimson sky and raising its gleaming towers, crown above crown to the stars above. Dost remember it, Lazarus?"

"Yea, and why not? Daily ever had I seen it, and even so, had the Rabbi, though he did seem to get a new vision of it from thy speech and face which did so please him."

"And, Lazarus, dost thou not hear it yet—the music of that night? From the throats of a thousand Levites rang out the evening chant which did move over the valley on noiseless wings and lose itself in the gathering night, making all the earth seem blessed. Canst thou forget it? Never shall I."

"Neither shall I forget," said Martha, "when thou didst reach home with thy guest, Mary. Thou didst rush upon me with the news so that I upset a pot of roast and burned my finger, and all for naught save that a Galilean Rabbi was to sup with us. Yet did I know the man would win the heart of Mary when she showed him to her lily bed, as surely as I did know Zador Ben Amon had lost her by too much eating of bird tongues, for I did hear him say —'Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'"

"And dost thou yet think on his words of wisdom as we sat at meat: Great be the mystery of life and great the hunger for Eternal Life."

"Now is Mary started again on speech-making which will begin with the bones of our fathers and end with the hereafter. I care not for it. Let us go, Joel, that we count the pig-skin bottles once again before daylight has waned."

When Martha and Joel had gone, Lazarus made himself comfortable with his feet against the parapet and turned to Mary.

"Once I sat with him upon the housetop," she said.

"Yea, Mary."

"The night was still and under the stars did stretch the far dim lines of the Mountains of Moab. Of days long gone did he speak—days when our fathers wandered in search of a Promised Land. When, from regions far beyond, the spies of Israel crossed the Moabitish hills, they did go to the home of an harlot. Wherefore they went hath not been handed down. Mayhap to teach the woman the seventh commandment of Moses. But they did go and she was an harlot. And when their hiding was discovered she let them over the wall and they escaped. For this kindness was her life spared, and when our fathers took the city, Salmon did wed the harlot. Then did Salmon beget Boaz; Boaz begat Obed; Obed begat Jesse; Jesse begat David. Thus was an harlot the mother in Israel of whom was begotten Israel's kings. And is not the blood of David in the veins of him we love—even Jesus? It

is not strange he hath ever words of kindness and a helping hand for women downtrodden by the Law, for as the eye of God seeth good in what the Law condemns, so doth the heart of the Master, and he hath courage to speak."

"Yea. To be with him doth give new visions."

"And great love. Sometimes when I am with him or my mind traveleth far paths with him, it seemeth as if God was pouring love into my heart until it is full to overflowing. Again it seemeth I hunger for love."

"Thy heart need not hunger for love. Thou art much loved."

"I know thou dost love me much."

"All who know thee, love thee."

"The Master?"

"Yea, yea—he loveth thee."

"Ah, Lazarus, this is knowledge my heart doth hunger for. I know he doth love me for he loveth all women. Martha sayeth he doth look upon the women of the street even as in my eyes he looketh. Joel did tell her so."

"Joel discerneth not the difference between sympathy in the eye of pity, and hunger in the eye of such love as constraineth a man to take one woman to himself apart from all the world even as the wild dove taketh its mate to the hidden cleft of the solitary rock. The Master hath no common love for thee."

"How knoweth thou this, my brother?"

"He is a man. I am a man. Hungry he sitteth at meat as a man. Weary he resteth his limbs as a man. Merry he looketh upon the fair arms and flying garments of dancers at the wedding as a man. Sad doth he grow, and troubled, as a man. With a child held to his bosom the tenderness of fatherhood sounds in his voice and with thee at his side the mightiest love with which the Creator hath blessed man, toucheth his soul. Did not the Creator so make man that it is not good for him to be alone? None but the heathen teach contrary to the Law."

"Thy words are to my heart as a song of Zion to the captives in Babylon. Yet would I have a sign from him."

"So do women always want signs," Lazarus laughed.

Mary rested her head against the myrtle twined support of the bower and looked away to the sky of the setting sun—nor did Lazarus disturb her thoughts by speaking. The hush of evening was brooding over the distant valleys soon to be enfolded in the twilight and there was no sound on the housetop when, a few moments later, Mary heard her name spoken just behind her. A man had come quietly up the steps and stopped where they opened on the roof. He wore a travel-stained garment, carried a staff and held against one shoulder some branches of flowering green. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," he said, as Mary and Lazarus with a glad cry, sprang up to greet him.

CHAPTER XIII

ORANGE BRANCHES

"THE hem of thy garment is heavy with dust and thy feet are torn by thorns," Mary said with concern. "Rest thee. I will unloose thy shoes' latchet and Lazarus will bring thee drink. Thou art weary."

"Yea, footsore and weary. But take thou the branches of orange blossoms. All the way from Ajalon have I carried them to make thee thy festival *lulab*,"* and he held the branches to her.

"The Day of Atonement did not find thee in the Temple. From Ajalon hast thou come?" Lazarus asked.

"Yea. On the road to Ajalon there is a place of turning that doth lead over a desert way, and rocky. But when the end is reached, there is a valley of springs giving rise to a stream that at last findeth the Great Sea. And in this hidden and quiet place where the wild gazelle feedeth unharmed because

*Festival branches carried at the annual Feast of Ingathering.

,there is no shedding of blood, there is a retreat of the Essenes. Here was I. Neither in the Temple nor out of the Temple cometh At-one-ment with the Father, but in the sanctuary of the heart, Lazarus. And it was in this holy place," and the guest turned toward Mary, "that the air was rich with perfume from a little grove of early oranges and citron. Here I did think of thee and brought thy *lulab* flowers, though their leaves are faded somewhat."

"Aye, but their fragrance is tenfold, as doth come from broken lilies."

"There is a fragrance that spilleth itself in dying. In this there is a hard lesson thou hast yet to learn, Mary."

"If I learn from thee it is not hard."

"Thou knowest not what thou sayest."

"I go to get thee new wine," Lazarus said.

"And take thou the branches, my brother, except one that I keep on the arbor roof to make the night fragrant like the valley of retreat beyond the way to Ajalon. The others put in the water pot by the cistern that they may be fresh for to-morrow's festival. And hasten thou back with the wine."

"Nay, hasten not," the young Rabbi said. "As I came along the way, travelers did give me figs and wine so that I hunger not. Yet when the moon hath cleared the mountains would I drink with thee thy new wine."

"As thou sayest," Lazarus replied, and taking the guest's cloak and staff he went below.

"I saw thy face as I stood waiting at the door," the guest said to Mary when they were alone. "Thine eyes saw farther than the parapet, and the vision made thy countenance a very pleasant one. Sit thee down and let us look together."

Mary sat down on a foot-stool which he drew to the side of his chair and turned a smiling face to him as she said, "Often in the heavens I see sights more beautiful than words can tell. Look you now, just over there where the clouds bank low behind the olive tops. Dost thou not see fleecy lambs playing on hillsides of ruddy lilies? And over where the mountain casts its purple line across the far-off pink—see thou the pile of marble palaces wrought in such beauty as even Solomon hath not conceived? And canst thou not see rosy chariots driving from the west, the banners of the horsemen streaming and their red and burnished hair reaching into endless tresses? But look you yonder!" and she pointed toward a bank of moving clouds. "There are such beautiful clouds as angel wings are made of, and is not that a distant shore across the sky?"

"Yea," he answered, "and snowy mountains bearing snowy cedars."

"A path of light doth open up between thy snowy mountains," and she leaned eagerly forward.

"Maybe the Golden Gates of the New Jerusalem

that lieth four square are opening, if thou hast eyes to see."

"Yea—I see! The clouds are turning into a throng of children—countless children. With snowy robes are they wrapped. Their arms are wings of feathery softness, and white and shining hair doth blow across their faces! Aye—how beautiful, and a golden glow shines over them. Stay! Children, stay!" and Mary pressed her hands together and leaned out across the parapet.

"They are passing," he said, watching Mary.

"Yea, they are passing into the forest of snow and the sea of gold. But oh, my Master, when hath eye seen a more beautiful sight?"

"Listen!" and he took her hand in his. "There is music for the passing footsteps of thy white and shining children."

Together they listened when, over hills and valleys there came, breathing on the silent air, the thousand throated choir of the Levites chanting in the Temple. As the music came to them, sometimes far and faint and sometimes like a fresh wave on a rising tide, it seemed to bear them away from the world and themselves, save as they were held together by the touch of hands. As the gray of twilight veiled the lowlands, the red fires of booth-dwellers shone out like vivid jewels scattered in irregular pattern, and when darkness had fallen the music ceased.

"My mystery," Mary said softly to herself.

"What is thy mystery?" he asked.

"The way of music with my soul. It casteth a spell over me so that sometimes I am moved to laughter, sometimes to tears, sometimes to great longing, sometimes to a love too great for me. My mystery!"

"Thy mystery will be no more a mystery when thou knowest that thy soul is but Waves of Being."

"I understand not what 'Being' means."

"Nor canst thou. But the way of waves thou knowest. Whether they run mountain high or as the smallest pebble stirreth them, yet is there ever motion, and the one touching the other doth bear the motion to the farthest bounds. So do thy Waves of Being in eternal motion make thy soul's substance."

"Thy words savor of much wisdom, but the meaning thereof escapeth me. Waves of water my eye can see. But Waves of Being—alas! What are they?"

"Hast thou stood by the mountain path when the grass is burned to stubble and the stones by the wayside are as ovens? Hast thou seen coming from the burning earth such waves as seem to be neither black nor white nor substance as thou knowest it? These are waves of heat. So the light taketh its way, and the sound, though the eye of the body may not discern them. The Waves of Being, thy

soul's substance, and the waves of light and heat and sound, be but one power made manifest in different degree. And when these unseen waves of melody come to thee from the Temple and strike against thy Soul, they have but found their own, and according to their measure do they stir that which thou callest joy and pain."

"I have seen the waves of fierce heat in the drought time and I have felt the waves of music breaking over my soul—yet question I, and doubt sometimes, all things—even God."

"Lift thy face, Mary—look up! The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Ask of thyself who laid the foundations of the earth? Who shut up the sea with doors and said 'Thus far shalt thou come but no farther and here shall thy proud waves be stayed'? Who hath bound the cluster of the Pleiades? Who hath loosed the band of Orion? Who hath put understanding in the inward parts? The *inward parts,* Mary, that still, small voice? Thou dost not doubt. That which thou calleth 'doubt' is but the unrest of growing, for thou dost ever grow in grace and knowledge of the Truth."

"And shouldst not one find wisdom who oft sitteth at the feet of the Master of Wisdom and who worketh mighty miracles? Anna hath been to Nain and hath brought back a strange story."

"How went the story?"

"To the home of a kinsman who owned vineyards near Nain did Anna go. And in Nain there lived a widow whose lot had been hard, for when her husband died his creditors came upon her and when they had done, a Temple lawyer had her one small field and the creditor drove away her milch goats and all the kids that were her winter meat. So grievous was her lot that she must needs fast to save her Temple mite. Nor was this the end of her pitiful plight, for her only son, as he was treading the wine-press, was smitten on the head by the sun, and died. Anna and her brother went to the funeral to help make mourning, and never hath she seen so queer an ending to shrill wailing as she saw that day. 'Ah, if thou couldst have been there,' said Anna. 'From Endor to Nain was Rabbi Jesus journeying accompanied by many. Shouting his praises were the men. Waving olive branches were the women while children did pluck bright leaves and scatter across the pathway. A merry party it was, singing and laughing. Then lo, did the funeral procession make its sad way. Rough was the road toward which it tended and gloomy the valley with gaping tombs. And through this dark valley did the sad note of the funeral dirge sound and with great sobbing and wailing did the mourners march beside the bier whereon lay the dead son of the widow. Thus did the march of Life and the march of Death make toward each other and the way was

wide enough but for one of them to pass. On, on they marched, the one passing to the hilltop and blue sky, the other to the bat-ridden place of corruption. When they did meet, on the bier Jesus placed his hand—a hand throbbing with the life of a strong man. And the Death march did stop. "Weep not," said he to the weeping mother. And to the dead did he say, "Young man, arise!" Then did the eyelids of the dead quiver; the set jaw move in its grave napkin; the gray face show the tinge of running blood. Hands stirred underneath the shroud and the dead awakened. It was wonderful! And a young man that had hold of the bier, when he saw the eyes of the dead open and the jaw fall apart, dropped his corner of the bier and ran.' And Anna doth say he is running yet."

Mary's story ended with a laugh in which her listener joined. "This is one of the greatest of thy miracles—so they say."

There was a moment of silence. Then the young man said, "There are no miracles. There is only Knowledge, and lack of it. When a soul is born of the Spirit, he cometh into the Light. Of Light cometh Knowledge and of Knowledge, Power. And as all life is one life, so is all power one power. Power and the Father's will to work bringeth the consciousness that *'I and my Father are one.'* There are no miracles."

"By thy wisdom thou doeth away with miracles.

Yet do men call thy mighty works miracles and dispute much as to who he is that doeth them."

"Who do men say that I am?"

"Some say thou art Elias. Some say Jeremiah. Some say John. Some say that with a camel train didst thou go to the Far East while thou wert yet a lad and in the schools of the Magi, far beyond the Punjab valley and the Indus, did learn to work wonders."

"And some say I am Beelzebub," he added.

Mary made no reply to this.

"And to turn back into its fleshy form a few waves of the universal sea of life—is this a miracle, think you? Thy life aboundeth in greater miracles."

"Methinks ofttimes that love is a miracle."

"Thou thinkest well."

"And oft my heart hath longed to open my lips to thee."

"Speak on."

"Thou art a man—not a youth, neither womanish. Yet when my eyes did first behold thee, in thy face shone the love of a mother for a child. Herein lieth a great mystery to my heart."

"As all life is one life, so all love is one love. Hath thine own love never exceeded the bounds of thy understanding?"

"Yea. Yea," she answered quickly. Then she paused.

"Say on, Mary," he said, listening with interest.

"Once an infant, brown and foreign, did mistake me for its mother. And on that selfsame day did a brood of motherless nestlings do likewise. Strange sensations came to me, and the strange thought that mayhap there be one motherhood for all creatures as there be a Father to all mankind, and the strangeness of my feeling was the heart-throb of it."

"Wilt thou turn thy face to me, Mary?" he asked. And when she had done so he said, "Thy feet are on the threshold of the mystery thy heart wouldst know."

"And wilt thou lead me across?"

"Dost thou love me, Mary—more than all these?"

"Yea, my master, thou knowest that I love thee."

"Wilt thou drink the cup given me to drink?"

"The cup, though I know not what thou meanest, with thee will I drink."

"Ho! Ho! Ho! The new wine cometh," called Lazarus on the steps, and laughing voices told the two on the housetop that the hour for words of wisdom was at an end. Lazarus and Joel brought the wine and the cups. Anna and Martha followed, carrying trays with sweetmeats and fruit. In the moonlight they set a table for a feast and after they ate and drank, Mary made music on the harp and they sang psalms.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted

up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in," their voices sang in unison. Then the women sang "Who is the King of Glory?" and the rich bass of the men's voices answered "The Lord strong and mighty!" Ever and again they sang, until Jerusalem lay dark and the red fires in the valleys had burned out.

"The night is far spent for one who hath come the way from Ajalon," Lazarus said at last.

"Bearing orange boughs," Joel added.

"Yet a sweet burden," laughed Anna as the three men turned to the stairs.

"My heart is eager for the festivities of to-morrow night," Martha said as she gathered the cups and bottles. "Lights will shine and the silver trumpets blow, and great will be the throng in gay apparel carrying bright *lulabs*."

"Yet far will the eye travel before it falleth on such fragrant boughs as these," Mary added.

Anna and Martha laughed. Before they turned from the housetop, Mary picked a blossom from the branch on the arbor roof. "This goeth to my pillow," she said. "It is a sign."

CHAPTER XIV

WITH WHAT EYES

WITHOUT the walls of Jerusalem, the hills and vales were dotted with booths of green. Inside the gates the city seemed to have burst into springtime bloom, and the populace looked like a walking garden, for every Jew carried an armful of green boughs, and in his hand a sprig of willow to be placed on the great altar. Many pious ones had witnessed the early morning service when a priest, entering from the water gate, brought a gold pitcher full of water from the Pool of Siloam. At the sacred altar it was mixed with wine and through silver basins and pipes sent on its way to Chedron while a thousand trumpets proclaimed the ceremony. But it was at night the great crowds thronged the Temple at the most festive of all Jewish holidays for at this time the Great Lights were lit, the altar piled with leafy offerings brought by pilgrims from all Palestine, and the thanksgiving music of the priestly choir made a glorious shout of rejoicing.

Into the Court of the Gentiles the crowds passed, and up the marble steps of the Beautiful Gate with

its Parian marble sculptured in gold and set with jewels. There had been the brightness of flambeau and lanterns in the outer court, but it was in the Court of Women that the Great Lights, branching out on high supports, were lighted. Just beyond this pillared and shining court and approached by fifteen marble steps, rose the Nicantor Gate with its titanic doors of Corinthian brass, more costly than fine gold, and towering to such a height that the moving throng looked like a line of ants creeping between its burnished pillars.

In the crowd thronging the Court of Women was Zador Ben Amon, and with him a Temple lawyer, who passed here and there to hear what the populace might be saying. When the people had turned toward the Nicantor Gate, just beyond which ten thousand candles illuminated the willow-decked altar, Zador stopped suddenly and stepped aside saying, "Let us tarry. I would use my eyes." After pausing a moment Zador pointed toward the steps and said, "Look, seest thou the woman with a man on each side of her? She weareth white with a veil. And the one man is a Rabbi with uncovered head and carrying a staff. The other weareth a blue turban with fringed sash on the side. See them? Midway of the third step they stand. Let us move toward them."

Keeping to the outer edge of the animated throng, Zador soon came to a place from which, by

standing on the base of a pillar he could see over the heads of the people. "Yea," he said to his companion, "it is Lazarus and his sister as I thought. And at his heels is the other sister with her man. Now I will get me on the track of my anklet. Watch thou my standing place while I call a guard." Leaving the Temple lawyer by the pillar, Zador Ben Amon soon found a guard to whom he said, "The woman in the white cloak and veil who walketh between the Rabbi uncovered, and the man in blue head-dress, with a sash, hath in times past vexed me sore because of a lost anklet which she prayed me to find for her. Since I have seen her last, good fortune may have brought her the trinket. This would I know. For her right leg just above the ankle was it made. Pass thou behind her as she maketh her way to Nicantor. There are fifteen steps, on one of these shalt thou overtake her. When thou hast done so, lift thou her skirt and—if she be offended, swear that thou didst it unwittingly. If she wear not the anklet, lift thy sword as though thou wouldst open a way for a priest. If it be there, make haste to tell me and a piece of gold shall be thine. I will watch thee from the base-stone of the fourth pillar."

So it happened that as the group from Bethany stood for a moment midway of the marble steps to look forward to the shining altar and backward at the surging crowd, some one lifted the skirt of

Mary. "What meanest thou," she exclaimed, turning to face a Temple guard. "He hath lifted my skirt," was her angry explanation as her brother and the Rabbi turned to the offender.

"Not of purpose did I, but from the press of the crowd," was his answer.

"Nay, with thy hands didst thou do it. I felt the touch of thy fingers."

Leaving Lazarus and Joel to have words over the matter, the Rabbi moved quickly a step higher and cast his eyes across the moving throng to the outskirts where he saw a thick-set man who wore a royal blue cloak and gold embroidered head-dress, standing above the others, and looking with fixed and eager eye at the group on the steps. Suddenly he became nervous, moved his body as if some discomfiture had come upon him and then turned his head slowly. The next instant he met the eyes of the Rabbi. As if he had been struck, he moved down from his foot-stone. "By the strength of my beard!" he exclaimed. "Didst thou see the face of that Rabbi? Nay? Such eyes he hath as looketh a hole into the inward parts of a man. Of a certainty will he know me again—and I him. Come, let us lose ourselves in this vast assemblage and yet go under the Gate of Nicantor. I would learn if this is the Rabbi who was with the woman."

For some time Zador Ben Amon and the Temple lawyer moved with the crowd. Now and then they

caught sight of the Bethany party and Zador made comment. "She walketh by her brother," he first said. Then, "Now she is with the Rabbi," and again, "Now she is with both of them. Yet I can not determine what I would from this place. Let us go to the East Gate that openeth on to the Bethany road. There the way is narrow and as they turn toward home the Rabbi will walk with the woman, if this is their choice."

The last stall on the narrow street toward the East Gate was that of a pottery molder and baker of small ovens. Outside his door, which was now securely barred, stood several large water-jars and behind them a low table used for mixing clay. When Zador and his companion reached this place they stopped and withdrew into the shadows. "The moon is rising. They will not be long coming," he said. "Whether the Rabbi is with the brother or the woman, this is the question."

"Thou dost not know him?"

"Nay, nor care I to know a man with eyes like the Great Lights—unless he is crossing my path with the woman."

"By the hair that lieth upon his shoulders and the staff in his hand he looketh like the Galilean Rabbi that hath been teaching in the Temple."

"A Galilean Rabbi? When did this Province of diggers in dirt and gutters of fish send forth Rabbis? Thou makest a jest."

"Nay. If thy eyes were turned more to the study of the Law and less to thy gold, then wouldst thou know that a Galilean Rabbi hath arisen."

"Now do I know he is a friend of the brother, for the woman is fair and her ways gentle, nor would she give to a rough and witless Galilean what she would withhold from me."

"There is a puzzle. The Galilean is not witless, but hath both wit and wisdom and speaketh with authority. Yet came neither his wisdom nor authority from the Temple. So did the lawyers and scribes question among themselves, and we held council. And to me it was given to speak, calling in question his authority. And I did say, 'By what authority dost thou speak things? And who gave thee this authority?' For the moment he did not speak. Then he lifted up two such eyes upon me as thou sayest look holes into the inward parts. And he did say, 'The baptism of John—whence was it? From Heaven or of men?' Then did we see of a surety he had entrapped us, for hard by hung the multitude that hold John the Baptiser,—whose father officiated in the Temple and who would have succeeded to the priesthood had he not taken to the wilderness shouting 'Repent, for the Kingdom be at hand!—as a great and mighty prophet. If we answer him saying, 'The baptism of John is of man,' then would they murmur and throw stones. If we say, 'The baptism of John is of God,' then would

this man of eyes say, 'Why did ye not hear him?' and he would claim succession to the Priesthood through the baptism of John."

"Thy speech doth upset my peace of mind if this is the man and he is with the woman, for as I live she is curious in her notions and might be taken with such words. But they will be coming soon. Watch well and look closely."

"Thy words sound pleasant. But my watch will I keep between the cracks of the water-jars. Once is enough to feel defeat by the wit of a Galilean."

As the Temple lawyer spoke, voices were heard not far down the narrow street. Both men stepped behind the jars. The lawyer sat low. Zador dropped on his knees keeping his eyes above the edge of the vessel. Several groups passed, laughing and talking, when the quick eye of the lawyer caught sight of the friends from Bethany. "It is the Galilean Rabbi," he whispered to Zador.

"Doth he walk with the woman?"

"Yea, following them all. But they pass. Look you."

Simon the Leper and two other elders walked in front with staffs. Then Lazarus and Anna carrying between them a branch over which they were making merry, while Joel and Martha followed close, singing bits of the thanksgiving choral. Following them and apart, walked the Rabbi and the woman Zador Ben Amon was waiting to see.

"He walketh with the woman," Zador said to himself. "With what eyes doth he look upon her?"

"A veil doth hide her face that only the Galilean may look upon it in the moonlight," the lawyer breathed softly.

"Doth he hold her hand?" and there was suppressed emotion in Zador's voice.

"Who knoweth?"

"Doth her shoulder touch his as she leaneth close to hear the words he speaks?"

"Who knoweth?"

"How doth he hold his arm nearest the woman?" and in his anxiety to see, Zador raised his head above the jar. "His words and touch maketh her face to shine. Like a sour citron did her countenance glow when I did try to touch her," he growled.

"Hst! Hst! Hst!"

"Where he walketh, there should Zador Ben Amon walk, whispering over her smiling face. Yet by all the worms of torment shall not that Galilean ass take from me the comely one of Bethany!" he muttered.

While the breath of the words yet hung on his lips the Rabbi turned as if in answer to a call and before Zador could drop behind the jar, a message had been flashed to him. And the Galilean smiled.

"God of Abraham!" Zador Ben Amon exclaimed when Lazarus and his friends had passed through

the gate. "With what eyes doth he do it? Twice hath he sent me his mind without words. As I stood by the pillar in the Temple did he not say to me, keen as the arrow flies, 'Thou art the man'? Now hath he shot again at me such words as lay hold like hooks of steel in raw flesh. 'Thou fool!' he hath said, and in such manner that now when the breath enter my body, it sayeth 'Thou fool!' and when it passeth out it sayeth 'Thou fool!' To the fires of Gehenna with such eyes!"

CHAPTER XV

THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

AN illness had fallen on Lazarus. By his bedside sat Mary. The curtains were drawn, and a lamp burned on a table near by. Bending over the couch Mary called softly, "Lazarus! Lazarus!" She straightened up and looked down at the body of her brother with grave concern. "Three days," she said to herself, "hath his groaning fallen heavily on my heart. Now doth the silence fall with heavier weight. Yet doth the skill of the physician avail not." Stepping to the door she called Martha. "Through the night I have been with him," she said to her sister as she came in, "and have done as the physician directed. Yet even before the midnight cock-crowing did he moan until tears wet my eyes for his much suffering. With bath and soothing words did I minister to him until the morning cometh, and sleep. But it is not good sleep."

Hastening to the couch, Martha bent over, calling anxiously, "Lazarus!" There was no reply. "I like not this sleep. It is too heavy—too heavy. Rub thou his hands while I summon the physician."

"Aye, but, Martha, three days hath the physician poured potions between the lips of our brother to no avail. Let us despatch a swift messenger for him we love, who hath more healing in his voice and touch than have all the physicians in Jerusalem. Beside the couch of Lazarus hath my heart cried for Jesus."

"Aye, so doth my heart cry out for Jesus. Yet hath he taken a far pilgrimage to Peræa. The physicians of Israel were good enough for our father and mother."

"Even so. Yet rest their bones in the tombs of their fathers! Is this good enough for our brother Lazarus?"

"Thou dost alarm my heart. With speed will I summon the physician."

"And send thou to me the servant."

Quickly on Martha's departure Eli came into the sick chamber. "With haste lend thine hand to help awaken thy master Lazarus," Mary said. "Rub thou his feet diligently while I rub his hands." After a few moments of effort which brought no response, Mary gave fresh orders. "He doth not awaken. Take thou the rue and the pennag and make a brew over the coals. Bring it steaming! Hasten."

"Doth our brother awake?" Martha asked, reentering the room. "Nay? A messenger is well on his way with a command of haste and the promise of thrice his fee if the physician is swift."

"Thou art wise. The promise of gold putteth wings on slow heels. But, Martha, my sister, would that the servant, Eli, had wings and were flying toward Peræa. Through the night as I did watch beside my brother, I did think of the many suffering ones the Master hath healed. And not one of them all did he love as he loveth our brother."

"Aye, he loveth Lazarus. And if death crosses our threshold will it not be as if death entered his own abode?"

"Lazarus—oh, my brother—wouldst thou lie so silent if the Master called thy name?" Mary pleaded, bending over the couch. Then to Martha she said, "The minutes pass like aged oxen turning rocky soil."

"The physician will not be long coming. With haste must I set the house in order." And Martha hung several garments on hooks in the wall, smoothed the couch covers, straightened the cups and bowls on the table, blew out the lamp and pulled back the curtains. Looking out the window she gave a short cry, exclaiming, "The sky is red—red as if a great veil had been dipped in blood and hung across the sun. Such a sight in the morning is an evil sign," and her face showed fear.

"I put not faith in signs," Mary replied.

"Since the beginning hath Israel been warned by signs and dreams," and Martha shook her head in sadness.

"Signs take neither the living nor bring back the dead. Hand me the pot of herbs and help me here," and Mary turned to the couch.

"Doth he swallow?" Martha inquired anxiously as she held her brother's head while Mary tried to administer the dose.

"Nay."

"As well. There is no virtue in it. He hath swallowed a water pot full already. Evil is about. The sky is red."

While the sisters stood about the bed the physician, garbed in a long coat of brown and striped turban, hurried in with an air of importance. He was followed by a servant carrying a bundle of herbs, some green sprigs and several cruises of oil. "What evil thing hath befallen thy brother since yesternoon?" he asked, going to the couch.

"A strange sleep hath fallen upon him."

The physician turned back his patient's eyelids and looked carefully. "Evil spirits are about," he announced. "When the medicine I did leave yesterday drove from his veins the devils of fire, then did demons of sleep rush in. So doth he sleep."

"Canst thou awaken him?" Mary asked.

"By my rare skill I can. Pour out thine oil," this to the servant, "and set forth the herbs. Mix thou a bitter potion and I will administer a prayer." From a wallet the physician took a small paper which he rolled into a pill between the palms of his

hands. The pill he dipped in a bowl. "This is to dispel evil spirits," he explained. "Make fast his head while I push the prayer between his lips."

Mary and Martha raised the shoulders of Lazarus, and the physician tried to force the pill into his throat.

"Even of his mouth have the evil spirits taken possession," he said, failing to force open the set teeth of the man. "Bring the oil." Then followed an elaborate anointing while the physician tried to rub in his prayers. Meantime several neighbors had entered the room and while Mary watched eagerly for the awakening of her brother, Martha stepped to the door to tell in anxious whispers of her brother's serious condition.

"Evil spirits have taken entire possession," the physician told the sisters when no sign of life responded to the oil bath. "There be yet one manner in which evil may be driven from thy brother. Wilt thou give of thy abundant hair, Mary?"

"Of my hair? Yea, thou shalt have all—even my blood for my brother Larazus."

"Seat thyself and bid thy servant to give me a plait of thy hair. And thou, Martha, bring me a knife wholly of iron and have thy man-servant in readiness with an ax."

Mary sat down on a stool and unbound her hair. In the middle of the back a plait was made, and this was cut from her head.

"Evil are the spirits that have taken possession of the master of this abode and fierce must be the contention of the angel of the Lord else they accomplish their dark desire. Pray thou who standest about this bed and seest the knife bound in this hair, that the path of evil spirits be cut off." Taking the iron knife which Martha handed him, he prayed over it, tied Mary's hair about it, uttered another prayer and turned toward the servant who had appeared with an ax. "Take thou this to the valley. Find there a thorn-bush aside from the pathway and there tie the iron knife by the hair of Mary and repeat the scripture which is on the scroll I give thee, and as the Lord appeared in a thorn-bush to Moses, so shall he appear again. And if thine eyes be holden that thou seest not the flame, yet will it of a surety be there, this being the sign—the bush be not consumed. Then shalt thou turn aside as did Moses when the Lord commanded him to take his shoes from his feet, for so shalt thou be on holy ground. And when thou hast hid thy face a sufficient time for the angel of the Lord to find thy iron knife to destroy the evil spirits, then shalt thou turn again to the bush and cut it down. Go thou, and hasten."

"How long ere thy skill will waken our brother?" Martha asked anxiously.

"Until the angel of the Lord doth overcome the demons of disease."

"Aye," said Mary, "but the time passes and the

sleep of our brother deepens." She bent over the couch and taking the hand of her brother called softly, "Lazarus! Oh, that the Master was here! One touch of his hand—one sound of his voice would be enough!"

"Who is this to whom thy sister's heart calleth?" the physician asked Martha. "Some magician?"

"The Galilean Rabbi—Jesus," she answered.

"Him they call 'Jesus of Nazareth'?"

"Even the same."

"He is an impostor. Away with him! To whom hath it been given save to a physician to cast out evil spirits with his pills and potions? Thy sister doth behave foolishly."

While the household was engaged about the bedside a party of mourners, having been told by the servant of the condition of Lazarus, gathered about the door seeking information.

"A terrible and deadly evil hath lain hold of the master of the house, a young man rich and noble," a neighbor said.

"What sayeth the physician?"

"A deep sleep hath fallen upon him from which neither the voices of his sisters nor the skill of the physician can awaken him."

"Thou sayest he is rich?"

"He hath vineyards and olive orchards."

"His sisters love him much—much will they pay for loud mourning."

"Yea, much they love him. Listen how Mary doth entreat him to answer her and Martha doth plead with the physician."

"Aye, aye," the mourners answered, nodding. "They will require much wailing."

At the bedside the sisters hovered, making frequent appeals to the physician for help. "His hands are getting cold!" Mary suddenly exclaimed. "And the cold creepeth upon him," and she rubbed his arms.

"He groweth cold?" asked the physician. "Then did not the iron knife cut off the way of the evil spirits. Hath there been a sign?"

"A red sky," Martha answered, fear showing on her face.

"When?" and there was eager interest in the physician's voice.

"This morning," replied Martha.

"Thou shouldst have told me," he said sternly, "that my oil I might have saved."

"Now do I send for the Master," Mary announced with decision. Turning to the door filled with neighbors and mourners she said, "A messenger! Is there among you one fleet of foot?" A lithe youth pushed his way to the front. "My blessings on thee, and a purse of gold if thou make thy tracks like that of a roe before a beast of prey. Fly thou to Peræa. Take thou the road by the upper ford and follow on past Bethabara. As thou goest

inquire for the Galilean Prophet and when thou hast found him, this say, 'Him whom thou lovest lies sick unto death!' And when he shall ask who sent thee, naught say save 'Mary.' Hasten thee! And God give thy feet wings like the eagle!"

"Thy brother will be dead before thy messenger gets beyond the brow of Olive," the physician announced.

Throwing herself by the couch Mary cried, "Brother—my brother! Speak thou to me—just once more speak thou thy sister's name!"

"No more shall his lips be opened till the Judgment Day," the steady voice of the physician replied.

"Hearest thou not my voice? I am thy sister Mary. God of my fathers! Dost thou not hear?"

"Closed be his ears until the trumpet of the dead shall sound," was the comment.

"Thou dost not mean Lazarus sleeps the sleep of the dead?" Martha cried in pain.

"By evil spirits hath my unfailing skill been set at naught. Thy brother sleepeth the sleep of death."

"No—no!" sobbed Mary, as the physician turned to collect his oil and herbs. "Lazarus is not dead!" and throwing her arms around Martha down whose face tears were streaming, she cried over and over, "He is not dead—he is not dead!"

While the sisters were giving way to their grief,

the mourners filed into the room. Some had cymbals, some flutes, some pieces of sackcloth which they put over their heads before turning their faces to the wall. "Alas the lion—alas the hero—alas for him!" wailed the mourners. "Woe! Woe! Death hath entered into the place of the living and hath taken the flower of its strength! Oh, grave! Oh, tomb! Hungry art thou! Woe! Woe! From the garden of woman's smiles hath he gone to darkness and the bat. Corruption hath gathered him to its bosom! Weep! Howl! Never shall he return to the place of the living from the place of the dead!"

Before the mourners had finished their lamentations, the body of Lazarus had been wrapped in a sheet and was being hastily borne from the house. Following the body, with her arms around her sister, Mary sobbed, "If the Master had only been here, my brother had not died."

CHAPTER XVI

HE CALLETH FOR THEE

THREE days after the death of Lazarus, Mary sat alone in his room beside the empty couch, which was turned upside down, as were the chairs also. The clothing that hung on the wall was covered with sackcloth and the tightly drawn window curtains were banded with black.

"Art thou ready to go to the tomb?" Martha asked, coming to the door of the room. "Soon will the mourners come from Jerusalem and great will the weeping be at the grave of our brother. Where is thy sackcloth?"

"Neither sackcloth nor ashes have I put on. Only to think, come I to this silent room."

"Knowest thou not it is yet unclean?"

"Uncleanness cometh not from the passing out of those we love. Only to keep the Law, observe I the mourning rites. Yet in my quiet do I think."

"Scarce four days is our brother dead and thou art at thy old habit of thinking. Wilt thou never learn thinking is not to tax a woman's time? Wouldst thou take from men their rights?"

"Methinks thinking is proper for whoever hath power to think. Why shouldst not a woman think if by so doing she can find answer to some question that doth perplex her heart?"

"Thou dost ever make thy way seem right because of fair speech. But of thy thinking what cometh? Here hast thou sat thinking by the couch of him who lieth in the tomb. Hast thou thought anything that is of service?"

"Whether it is of service I know not. But of my thinking doth it come to me that it is not wisdom to seal the dead in tombs when the breath hath scarce left the body. They carried our brother to the garden and laid him on fresh earth as is done with things unclean. There did they trim his beard and cut his nails and wrap him. And before the sun went down he was put in the tomb behind a great stone that scarce a score of men could roll aside."

"Much thinking and much grieving doth make thee foolish. Know you not that the Jew wanteth not corruption in the house after the sunset? Even the air were not enough to hold the evil spirits that would come of it."

"The Jew hath strange ideas about evil spirits and greatly fears something he knoweth not of. Thus doth fear early seal the dead in the tomb—and perhaps they are not dead."

"Thou speakest strangely, as if thy trouble hath gone to thy head."

"Fear not for my head, Martha, since from thy lips did I hear the strange tale that did give rise to my thinking. Didst thou not tell of a kinsman of Joel who put his wife in a new tomb and sealed the door with a great stone? And what was it that did leap into their arms when, after three years, they rolled the stone away? Was it not the bones of the woman who had been buried alive? And had she not stood with her lips against the stone crying for help until she starved? Aye, and she stood on, waiting for those to come who should learn from her bones what her lips had prayed to tell. Didst thou not repeat me this, my Martha, even to the screams of those into whose arms the woman's bones did fall?"

"Thou sayest truly. But save this one, my ears have not heard so gruesome a tale."

"What might happen once, might come to pass again. Who knoweth if there might not be others—who knoweth?"

"Did not the physician say Lazarus is dead?"

"Yea, the physician."

"And the Rabbi?"

"Yea, the Rabbi."

"And did not the chief mourners whose business is ever with the dead, speak him dead?"

"Yea, the chief mourners."

"Then why inviteth thou misery to thy heart? God of our fathers, Mary! After these days our

brother stinketh! Wouldst thou court the woes of corruption by opening the tomb? Arise! Wrap thy veil over thy face. The mourners will soon be coming."

"Nay, I go not. Even before the Master's teaching brought me wisdom did my heart oft question the gain of lamentation and disfigurement, the soiling of the hair with ashes and the itching of the flesh with sackcloth. What is the use to turn beds upside down, to shut the sunshine out with black and give voice to naught but howls and wails? Bringeth this back the dead?"

"Thou art queer at times. Wouldst thou do away with our ancient customs? Since the days when David did wail in sackcloth for his son, hath Israel so done."

"If there be not reason in customs, wherefore hold to them? Is it forbidden the Jew to gain wisdom in a thousand years, or must we ever follow custom for no other reason save that we follow? Dost thou not believe in the resurrection as the Master teacheth?"

"I believe my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

"Then why much fruitless mourning? Oft to my mind come the words of the Master. In the quiet of the garden did he tell me of the time his father Joseph fell asleep in death, and his words to his mother bore her up with comfort. When I am

alone, in my heart, I try to seem as the mother of Jesus in her trouble, and take to myself his words to her. Aye, Martha, if the Master had been here what comfort would have been ours. Didst not thy heart call for him?"

"I did wish for him, yea. But forgettest thou the kindness of Joel?"

"I had no Joel—but listen, Martha. Afar I hear the sound of mourning."

"It is our mourners coming round the hill from Jerusalem," Martha said after listening a moment. "Many friends and a fat purse getteth much mourning. Wilt come?"

"Nay, I like not hired mourning. It seemeth but noise. Here I will stay and let my tears drop where they will not be counted by the passer-by."

The sound of flutes and wailing voices, which before had seemed far away, came nearer. Martha drew her veil across her head as she turned in the door. "I go to join the mourners at my brother's tomb. When thy friends ask of thee, what reason shall I give?"

"Tell them weariness hath overtaken me and I would be alone."

"Is there none thou wouldst see?"

"Nay, not one," Mary answered softly.

As Martha passed down the steps the sound of the mourners came from in front of the door. A

moment they paused, then went wailing on to the tomb.

"I am alone," Mary sobbed as quiet again fell over the room. "Martha hath Joel and when the mother of Jesus did pass through the Valley of Separation, did she have him whom my soul loveth? Oh, that I might have felt the pressure of his strong hands around mine when the fingers of my brother grew cold and weak! Oh, that I might have heard his voice speaking sweetest comfort when the voice of my brother was hushed in death! Oh, that Jesus had been here! And my heart is sore because he came not. Urgent was the message and swift delivered, yet have two days passed and he tarrieth yet in Peræa while my heart doth break with loneliness!" and she threw herself down beside the couch.

She had lain but a moment when Martha from the outside called, "Mary! Mary!" There was no response from the quiet room. "Mary! Mary! Mary!" shouted Martha joyfully, just outside the door.

Mary arose in haste. What had come over Martha who had only now left to go mourning?

"Mary—Mary!" and in her eagerness Martha forgot that the room of Lazarus was yet defiled and ran across its threshold crying, "The Master hath come!"

"The Master hath come?" Mary exclaimed, springing toward her sister.

"Yea, yea! The Master hath come and calleth for thee!"

"For me—he calleth for *me?*" and Mary's voice was vibrant with new life.

"Yea, for thee. Aye, not even of Lazarus whom he loveth did the Master make inquiry, but taking me aside did he ask of 'Mary,' and biddeth me hurry to call. Hasten thou? The Master waiteth!"

Transfixed with joy for the moment, Mary folded her hands and lifted a shining face heavenward, saying again, "The Master hath come and calleth for me—for *me*—for *me!*" Then she caught up a veil and followed Martha hurriedly from the room.

CHAPTER XVII

THINK ON THESE THINGS

THE scent of freshly turned earth, mingled with the fragrance of citron blossoms, hung on the air as a woman from a Galilean fishing town made her way around a hill-path that overlooked the highway and entered into it a little farther on. It was the time of plowing and sowing in Palestine. In a field close by, a sower with a basket on his arm scattered the seed broadcast. Farther down the hillside a peasant was beating his seed into the soil with branches and thorns, and in the valley could be seen a flock of goats being driven back and forth across the field to cover the seed. But the woman was not interested in the sowers. On a stone near a clump of citron she sat down to watch the long roadway for a first sight of one beloved. Months before he had bade her farewell and had journeyed to Judea. In his own Galilee he was accounted a great and mighty teacher and wonder worker and gladly had his message been heard by the common people who followed him in throngs and oft would have pro-

claimed him king. But from Jerusalem had come conflicting reports, and it was with a strange hope and a strange fear the woman waited his return.

The sower with the seed bag had gone and the birds had come in his place; the thorn branches had been cast aside by the man on the hill and the goats were being driven from the valley field, when the figure of the woman, who had been sitting like a statue on the gray stone, suddenly became animate, and with eager step hastened into the highway to meet an advancing pilgrim. Wearily he came as if even his staff were too great a burden, until he saw the woman. Then his pace quickened. With outstretched arms she greeted him, crying in joy, "The God of our fathers bless thee, my son!"

Tenderly he embraced her, pressing the kiss of peace upon her cheek and saying, "Blessed art thou among women!" Then putting her away he said, "Is all well with thee, woman—my mother?"

"Yea, save that my heart hath grown hungry to starvation for a sight of thee, my beloved son, and anxious have I been to hear news of thy pilgrimage throughout Judea and beyond the Jordan. On thy long journey, thou hast found friends, and rest and love?"

"Friends and rest and love," he repeated, and the expression of weariness on his face gave place to a smile. "All these I found under one roof, which was to me a home."

"And who were these kindly ones and generous?"

"A young man, Lazarus of Bethany, and his two sisters. And the one of them is Martha, much given to cooking fine meats and sweeping for dust where it is not."

The woman laughed and asked of him, "Doth this Martha love thee?"

"Yea, as she loveth her brother."

"And the other sister, doth she too brew gravy and seek the dust?"

"Nay. She doth make lilies grow and seek the pearl of greatest price. At my feet hath she chosen the better way than that of meat and drink. She is born into the Kingdom."

"Doth this sister, too, love thee?"

"Doth she love me?" he repeated. But he made no answer save as it was written in the face he turned toward the distance beyond the plowed fields.

"What is her name?" his mother inquired very softly, lest she dispel some pleasant thought.

"There is but one name."

"But one name—and yet a world of women?"

"Mary," he repeated, as if to himself.

"Thy mother's name," and the woman laughed for joy.

"Yea—my mother's name."

For the time of a short walk the light of glad

memories shone in the face of the pilgrim. Then the expression that told of a heavy burden came again. "Like sheep without a shepherd are my people scattered," he said wearily, "and there is no Zion. Rome alone is ruling there through the Imperial Legions housed in the Tower of Antonio, over against the city of David. Even the Sanhedrin hath turned wolf-hearted so that for gain the people are fleeced like the ewe lamb, and with none to succor—and my Father's house hath become a den of thieves."

"Even so do I remember," the woman replied sadly. "When thou wert my tiny one close to my breast, I went to the Temple with my offering of a dove. And lo, in the Temple were sellers of doves. One stopped me who said of my offering, 'It hath a blemish.' And forthwith I was sold one thrice blemished. Yea, I remember, for they took from me my last penny for the ill-favored bird and at a dry breast didst thou, my little one, struggle that night unsatisfied. But thy great and wondrous teaching —thy new commandment that is to bring the Kingdom, will it not make all these things right?"

"Nay, woman, nay. New wine in old bottles doth but burst them. So will this new law of love, this new law of justice established in man's heart, burst the old customs that hold men in bondage. Then much fasting, long prayers, much saying of 'Lord! Lord!' will avail nothing, but only man's

duty to his fellow man. For how can man love God whom he hath not seen, if he fail in duty to his brother? For this teaching in the Temple did those pious assassins of the Temple take up stones to kill me. Herein is my heart greatly troubled. I preach the gospel of love and of justice; but bran for the belly and stripes for the back beget brute creatures that know not how to love. Neither can he love who withholds all save bran, nor stays the hand that holds the scourge."

"My heart catcheth the sadness in thy face," the woman said softly as the young man looked out into the gathering dusk. "And a fear doth pain me lest my merry child hath gone from me forever. But yesterday thou wert my little one. When first I heard thy cry, e'en though thy cradle were a manger, it was as if angels sang, and the pressure of thy lips against my breast brought to my heart great joy as if the glory of the motherhood of all the ages were mine. When thou didst learn to walk, thy baby feet made sweet music and thy wee hand on my cheek oft drove away heartache. When thou wert older, thou went to the fields with me. Dost thou remember the sloping hillsides red with lilies in which thou didst roll thy body? And at the seashore—rememberest thou the little tracks so soon washed away? And dost thou remember thy first visit to Jerusalem and the valley of weeping where the dark streams issued from the crags and many

tombs were hewn from rocks? Here it was we camped and thy father and I did miss thee. And dost thou remember the questions thou wert asking when we found thee in the Temple? Many times had thou asked them to me before. And Nazareth —doth thy heart remember thy playmates—Jael and the others?"

"Jael? Yea, verily I remember Jael."

"Often I think of those days and remember that then, even as now, the question oft asked was, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' "

"A cruel question and senseless. Can any good thing come out of hunger and cold and fear of the Law?" he asked quickly.

"Ah, the long struggle—the bitter struggle that the poor know. Toiled we not from sun to sun, yet ofttimes was our table bare of honey and fat, and my heart ached that thy tiny garments must always be thin and patched, that thou, my little Jesu, should be poor of the poorest."

"Poor? Nay, rich was I above all others, rich in the love of thee, my mother! Woman, the richness of thy love hath blessed my life and through my life, thy love shall bless the world."

There was a moment's pause. Then the woman said in tones of reverence, "Yea, I love thee—love thee! And when thou art far away, all things speak of thee, ofttimes with sadness. As I lay on my roof alone, the waves that roll nightly against

the near-by shore seem sobbing—ever sobbing under the silent stars for that which can be no more. And as I journey over the paths where once thou wert with me and thy hand lay close in mine, the mourning dove calling from the cleft of the rock bringeth to my heart the pain of unutterable longing for days that be gone forever. Before thy ax and tools wert laid away thou didst make many things, one day a cradle—the next a bier. And between these two doth all life lie. Life, like the red lily—yesterday a bud hidden in its green; to-day a flower reaching toward the sun; to-morrow a dried leaf waiting for the oven. As I think on these things I grow sad and fearful. Yesterday the throng would make thee king. To-day those of the Temple would stone thee. To-morrow—to-morrow it may be the crown and the Kingdom—or—it may be—" The woman's voice which had been growing unsteady, ended in a sob and she hid her face against the shoulder of the young man.

"Weep not, woman, nor fear thou death," he said reassuringly. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Hast thou not often thought of this as thou hast seen the sower and the reaper in his season?"

"Aye, of the Kingdom thy words be comforting. But to my heart thou art dearer than e'en the Kingdom."

"Fear not death. Death is but change. Change is but growth. Growth—ah, growth is *life*. Didst not the infancy of thy babe give place to the childhood of the boy who played in the market place? Didst not childhood drop into the silence of the past as the youth swung his ax on the hills of Nazareth? And the days of the carpenter—are they not dead days? Is not the bench of the carpenter deserted forever? Aye, hath the babe, the child, the youth all gone that the man may live. And to-morrow will the man pass to yet another higher form in my Father's plan of more Abundant Life. Verily, all that hath gone on before must die that that which is, may live. Verily, that which is, must die, that that which is to be, may be. But ever the thread of Life goes on unbroken and always upward on the way. Whilst thou liest alone at night and the waves of Galilee make moaning in thy heart for that which can never return, think on these things."

CHAPTER XVIII

THOU ART THE KING

THE sun cast its rising brightness over the Sea of Galilee which lay in its rock- and sand-bound bed, quiet as if yet asleep and blue as the cloudless sky hanging over it. Against the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky, the figure of a man, who stood close to the water's edge, was sharply silhouetted. For a time he stood with folded arms looking away toward the distant coast line. Then he turned and cast his eyes on the near-by shore reaching away from his feet in every direction.

In the slanting rays of the rising sun, this bit of beach looked like a monster honeycomb, each shapen place the broken track of a human foot. It was here the day before, Jesus of Nazareth had talked to a vast concourse of people. So insistent were they in getting close to him, he took to a boat, and even then men crowded knee-deep into the quiet water to hear his teachings, so strangely different from that of the Temple priests. All sign of the multitude was now gone but the far reach of foot-

prints. At no great distance from where the lone man stood, a pile of rock jutted into the water behind which was a secluded spot known to the man on the shore and to which he now went, making his way around the point on half submerged stones. Farther down the shore was a line of rushes and willows growing by a wady that in wet season turned a small stream into the sea.

The man who had sought seclusion behind the pile of rock had scarcely found time for meditation or for prayer, when a second figure came upon the sand, the figure of a woman. As she approached, the stillness was not broken by so much as the call of a bird. Yet the man behind the wall of rocks moved that he might watch her, yet himself remain unseen. Slowly and painfully she moved the burden of a wasted and diseased body toward the water's edge, looking about with the caution of a wounded beast. One of her arms was covered with sores. The knee joint of a leg, around which she put both hands from time to time, was swollen to great size. Her eyes were sunken in a colorless face. Her hair was thin and uneven and her garments were tattered and stained with soil.

Reaching the edge of the water she sat down, putting her leg in place with her two hands. Then she began digging in the soft sand and soon there was a bowl of water before her. She bathed her face and poured water on her sores. Again she

looked cautiously about and listened. All was still. She hurriedly drew off her bodice and put it in the bowl of water, but before she had finished cleansing it she was startled by the sound of a dipping oar quite near, then from behind the line of rushes a small fishing boat came into view. Folding her arms across her breast and bending low to hide her nakedness, the woman in a shrill voice cried, "Unclean! Unclean!"

The fisherman instinctively pulled away a little, lifted his oar and stopped.

Again the voice, now half sobbing, called, "Unclean! Unclean! Oh, Jael—I am unclean!"

The fisherman gave a start and cried, "Who art thou that doth call 'Jael' in the voice of one dead?"

"It is Sara."

"Sara is dead—by bitter hemlock did she die."

"Yea, Sara is dead. Yet not by bitter hemlock. By the living death of an issue of blood which is worse than leprosy hath Sara been buried from the clean, though she yet liveth."

"God of my fathers!" The words rang out on the stillness as an accusing yell. "It is Sara speaking from a living tomb. Whence hast thou come?"

"To the place where soldiers are quartered in the household of Herod was I taken. Here were many other maidens. Some there were whose tongue I knew not. But on the faces of them all

was one speech written, one fear and one prayer for death. Here were we searched to the skin. Here was my hemlock taken. Here did Herod walk forth and when he did see a maiden that well pleased him, to the palace she went. But not I. By those of brutal force was I taken. And when I was no longer fair, my strength had gone and the issue of death had come upon me, then was I cast out. Since, have I wandered, feeding on what the gleaners left and where the fruit grows wild and the springs cast up their water. To-day I came to wash my garment that doth pain me by its stiffness. Then comest thou and I am covered with shame. Once I was clean as my love for thee, but now—oh, Jael—go back! Go back!"

"Nay, but I will take thee first across the water to the country of the Gadarenes. The outcast of Gadara be better fed than dogs, for in the place of caves and tombs do they congregate and bread be carried thither more than the crumbs cast to the unclean by those making much prayer in Israel. Go hence."

"Nay—nay! The screams of the tomb-dwellers hath come across the water to my ears at night."

"These are maniacs chained to rocks."

"I go not. Though I be unclean, would I be free, lest when my misery go to my head, I too be chained to a rock. Alone will I wander. Get thee gone, my Jael—get thee gone that I may draw my

garment from the water and hide away from the light."

"Thou shalt have my garment," and he snatched his upper garment from his body and, hastily paddling to the shore, spread it on the sand.

"The blessing of God on thee, Jael—Jael who was once mine," she sobbed. "When the rains fall cold will it warm my body as thy love did once warm my heart. Haste thee now—hast thee away, once my beloved. The sun rises; soon the fishermen will gather and stones will be my portion. Wilt thou go?"

"Yea, Sara, when thou lettest me know by whose hand this evil hath come upon thee and me."

"By the hand of the soldier who smote thee into sleep and weakness and stole me by force."

The face of the fisherman turned livid with anger. His fingers twitched and his breath came hard as he drew from under his skirt a shining blade and held it aloft shouting until the rocks gave back the echo of his voice, "Look thee, Sara—once my betrothed! By the height of the sky above me; by the depths of the sea beneath me; by the distance that lieth between the East and the West and the hand that set the stars, do I swear to bury this blade in the heart of the beast that hath taken from me my Sara. May the God of my fathers lay me low in the fires of Gehenna if I do less!" A moment the fisherman stood with upraised arm. The rising

sun fell on the gleaming steel like a fire along its edge.

A sob from the shore broke the silence. "Go! Go!" cried the half-naked creature by the water.

With a last look of pity and of horror, Jael seated himself, took up the oars and passed from sight around the ledge of rock. In a few moments, however, he returned, rowing swiftly. He pushed his boat up on the sand and went ashore. There was no living thing in sight. Whether Sara had fled to the rushes and willows or had cast herself into the sea, he knew not. As he stood he heard his name spoken. Looking around again, he saw no man, and yet again he heard a voice saying, "Jael."

"Whose is this voice?" he questioned. "A strange voice yet it seemeth I have somewhere heard it."

"Thy heart is troubled, Jael," the voice said. "Come unto me and I will give thee help." From behind the rocks the words came. Hastening into his boat he rowed around the narrow point and came upon a man of about his own age who wore one of the garments of a Rabbi. "Dost thou remember me?" the stranger said to Jael.

With dripping oar poised on the boat's edge, the half-naked fisherman studied the face of the man on the rocks. Then he exclaimed with joy, "Thou art Jesus of Nazareth! Yea, well do I remember thee and the games of our childhood."

"Rest thy boat, Jael. I would talk with thee."

"The years have been many since we ran the streets of Nazareth," Jael said, his eyes studying the face of Jesus, "yet the struggle hath gone on."

"How hath thy struggle gone?"

"Wrest I my bread from the sea. In the nine cities on her border have I sold to the markets. Yet never have I seen thee there."

"While I was yet young I went on a far journey in search of Wisdom," the Rabbi said thoughtfully. "More years than one was I with strange peoples, who were hungry for God as are my brethren in Israel, yet searching ever for him where he is not found, save a few wise ones. When I had learned that the heart of all mankind is one heart, the need of all mankind the same need and one God sufficient for all, then came I back to Galilee to preach good news to my people."

"So have I heard thou art a prophet and a wonder worker. Some there are who have called thee a king."

"What sayest thou?"

"Said I, 'He is neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. Was not his home in Nazareth? Was his father not the town carpenter? Was he not poor like unto the rest of us? Hath any good thing come out of Nazareth?' And the man who did say with loud speech that thou art a king, I did smite on the mouth. 'A king?' said I. 'A king—

this son of a carpenter that once did shout wildly as we chased goats over the hills and who ran fleet-footed when his mother called him to sop—he is a king, and while Jael yet stinketh of fish? For thy lack of wits thou shouldst be soundly kicked where it be not seemly to apply the sting,' and I smote him. 'All fools are not yet dead fools—what sayest thou?"

The face of the Rabbi was smiling when the fisherman raised his eyes for an answer. "Thou art right. There are yet those among the living, void of understanding and because of this thy heart suffereth."

Jael looked at Jesus a moment as if he failed to catch the meaning of the words. Then he said, "Yea, as if a torch had been touched to my blood do I suffer. If thou hadst eyes to see through these rocks thou wouldst have beheld a maiden carrying about in her body a living tomb of corruption which came to her at the hand of Herod and back of him, of Rome. Ah, that the prophets were not all dead, for had they not powers of healing? That Sara might be made whole?"

"And dost thou think all power for healing passed from the earth with the passing of the prophets? Hast thou not heard of late that the sick are healed, the lame walk and the blind made to see?"

"Yea, have I heard. Yet I believe not. In Chor-

azin and Bethsaida had there been much boasting of thy wonder-working powers. Yet thou didst not any mighty works there."

"Because of their hardness of heart and unbelief I did not many mighty works in these cities, neither in Tiberias."

"There be ever an excuse," Jael answered, laughing. "Yet I take thee for a good fellow and when a day cometh for idle talk will we be boys again together as in Nazareth. Yet for a season must my eyes be ever looking—looking for him into whose heart the point of this may find burial," and he drew out his blade. Jael turned the weapon over slowly once or twice and ran his finger lightly across the thin part.

"They that lift the sword shall perish by the sword," the Rabbi remarked quietly.

"Yea—thou speakest. So shall Jael the fisherman make thy words come true against him who hath in days past lifted the Roman blade to smite the Jew."

"Hast thou not heard the better way is to return good for evil?"

Jael turned a glance of astonishment on the Rabbi as he said, "Now know I for certain thou art no prophet. Doth not the Law say, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'? And wouldst thou do away with the Law?" and he lifted his oars as if desirous of getting away from an impostor.

"In thy ship would I also go," the Rabbi said. "Peter with James and John and others of my brethren soon cometh and I go with them."

"And art thou a fisherman as well as a wonder worker?" There was mockery in the voice of Jael.

"Yea, of such fish as thou art."

"Call me not a fish," Jael retorted angrily. "Because thou hast a following and I yet toil, dost thou call me fish!"

"Take no offense, Jael," the Rabbi said kindly. "Such fish as thou are Sons of God not yet caught in the drag-net of His calling. Go with me into the deeper waters and thou shalt learn."

The sound of husky voices raised in snatches of song and speech came from behind the band of rushes and a moment later a sailboat with full crew and loaded with nets, rode into view.

"Son of Barjona," shouted the Rabbi, "my friend Jael and I would go with thee."

"Ye ho! Ye ho!" answered a lusty voice and the large craft slackened speed that the small boat might be fastened to its side.

"We seek the deep," Peter said as Jael and Jesus climbed up the side of the ship, and when they were safely landed he shouted, "Launch out!" and the boat turned toward the Gadarene shore.

Before the first net had been cast, Jael spoke with Peter. "What manner of man is this Rabbi Jesus?" he asked. "While yet I was young I did

live in Nazareth and with him eat and play. Then was he the son of a carpenter and was learning the use of tools. Now he doth talk strangely of being a fisherman, yet hath he the savor of a Rabbi."

"What manner of man? I know not. Yet when he called me to be his disciple he did say he would make of me a fisher—not of much sea food—but of men. So now do I follow when he sayeth follow, and fish for my bread between times."

"Where getteth he the name of wonder worker?"

"That which men say he doeth, he doeth, and more."

"And thou dost believe this? I believe not."

"Believe? Yea, what my eyes see. Did not my wife's mother lay sick of a fever? Did not he heal her by the touch of his hand? Have I not seen one born blind made to see by his power?"

"Nay. Never hath one born blind been made to see."

"Dispute me not, else wilt thou tempt me to cast thee into the sea. I speak the truth."

"I believe not."

"Hath any man bidden thee believe? Get thee hence."

During the day, the crew commanded by Peter cast their nets, but after each casting drew them in empty and when the sun had neared the distant

water line, they were yet toiling. A drowsiness had fallen over the sea and a bank of gray clouds lifted itself slowly and stealthily above the horizon line to the northwest and spread its flanks as it rose over the water like the wings of some ominous creature of the air. The Rabbi, who had toiled with the others until late in the afternoon, left them before the clouds rose, and finding some dry nets made a pillow and lay down to sleep. The other fishermen toiled on. One wing of the cloud bank reached across the sun and the sea grew restless. But it was not until a sharp breeze struck the bearded faces bending over the nets that Peter said to James, "Let us back to land. A storm ariseth."

The nets were quickly hauled in and the sails loosened to the rising wind. But the storm was one of the sudden kind that at times sweep Galilee like an unbridled fury, and almost before they were aware of its speed their ship was running like a wild bird, while Peter shouted and the crew worked with sails and tackle. The light of the sun turned dark. The fury of the storm increased until the air was filled with roaring and the earth seemed to be vomiting the sea from its bosom. When the darkness was riven by lightning, the set faces of the fishermen, fighting for life, showed pallid for a moment and the racing billows glimmered with blue streaks.

It was while the gray was turning yet darker that Peter caught sight of that which took his

attention from the storm. "My Lord and my God!" he cried in great alarm. "What is that?" and he threw out a long arm which wavered with the vibration of the boat, as he pointed.

"Where? What seest thou?" those about him called back.

"I know not. But look you where the waves boil as a brew doth boil in a kettle! Something doth move about the waters like a strange, living mist."

"It is but spray thrown up."

"Nay, nay, not spray. It riseth and moveth itself aright, like unto a man."

The fishermen gathered at the side of the pitching ship and held on to one another and to the wet woodwork.

"It is a man. It walketh on the water!"

"It is the ghost of John whose head Herod took off!"

"Walks it without a head?"

"Nay, it hath a head."

"It is a spectre. It treadeth the way of death and that swirling pool over which it hovereth is our grave!"

"Look you! Look—my Lord—my Lord! A light cometh where the face is. God of our fathers—it is Jesus walking the waters like a bird of the storm! When gat he from the ship? Watch thee the spirit, James, while I find the place he lay." And Peter fell on his hands and knees and started to

creep toward the pile of fish-nets in the other end of the boat.

In terror the men he had left huddled together, except James who watched the spirit moving over the water. A cry from Peter drew their attention. "He is here," they heard him shouting above the whistle of the wind. "He is sleeping as if the soul of him had departed!"

"Wake him! Shout into his ear that we perish —we perish—" The last words of James who had called, were swallowed up by the hissing of a wave which broke over the deck and threw the men into the rigging and nets.

"Waken him before she takes the next wave! Hasten!"

The words were borne away on the gale but in the ear of the sleeping Rabbi, Peter was shouting as he shook his shoulder, "Master, the tempest is raging! The billows dash like mountains! Just ahead lieth death! Carest thou not that we perish? How canst thou lie asleep? Thy garments are running like a river and thy hair washed tight to thy head! Awake! Awake!"

The sleeping man awoke. The next moment James shouted, "The spirit hath passed away!"

As Jesus made his way to the prow of the ship which was pointing high on the crest of a wave, he saw in the flashes of light, the blanched faces of the terrified crew.

"The winds be contrary," James shouted as he passed him.

"Nay, not the winds, but the force that is back of the wind is divided," he answered. "They need but a center in which to become as one."

Though the ship was taking the waves and pitching so violently that all hands lay flat where they had been thrown, Jesus made his way steady-footed to the high point of the prow where he folded his arms and looked out over the scene of turbulence and darkness. He breathed deep and lifted his face to the flakes of foam torn from the long spray-arms of the warring waves. He turned his ear to the moan of the gale which seemed to breathe out in wrath from the heart of the earth. Calm and secure as if he and the elements were one, he rode for a few moments watching the play of the divided force. Then he held forth his hands after the manner of a High Priest in benediction and said, "Peace. Be still." And the wind and the waves obeyed his will, the wind moaning itself into nothingness; the waves subsiding into their wonted calm, and in the dawn of the setting sunlight, they saw the shore.

When Jesus turned about, he found Jael kneeling beside him and holding to the hem of his garment with both hands. On the face that looked up to the Rabbi was written revelation and the joy of a great escape. "Thou art the King!" he cried.

"Forgive me the blindness of my heart I pray thee and grant my soul one request!"

"What wilt thou, Jael?" Jesus said.

"This be my one desire—that Sara yet liveth and be made whole."

"According to thy faith shall thy desire come to pass," he answered. Then he called Peter saying, "Cast now thy net and make ready for the ingathering."

The net was cast and a great burden of fish towed to the shore, which was washed clean of foot-marks and strewn with fresh pebbles. With the vigor of new-born joy, Jael worked with the other fishers. But when he would have come in contact again with his hope, he found Jesus had gone, no man knew whither.

PART TWO
A. D. 33

CHAPTER XIX

CATACOMBS COMRADES

WITH its hyena head pointed toward the Imperial Capitol, the brazen She-Wolf of the Roman Empire stood, its bristled hair and exposed fangs symbolic of the beast-nature that was its Babylonian inheritance. Enthroned on her Seven Hills, Rome had subjugated and pillaged the nations of the earth until she had grown drunk with power, and although life on the Palatine and the Quirinal was one outflowing exercise of brute force and one long feast and revel on the spoils thereof, yet was the Empire rushing as headlong to the destruction predestined at the hand of her own corruption, as was Tiberius Cæsar rushing to his earthly end by debauchery unbridled. And although neither the Latin world nor its vassals had will or vision to foresee it, Time, in its inscrutable womb was fashioning that which was to bring about conflict ages-long, between Pagan autocracy and the spiritual essence of Liberty for all humankind.

On an evening when the purple and blue, the

glistening white and golden glow and shining green of an Italian spring, speaking through sea and sky, through billowing clouds and the verdure of the earth, was rivaled by the purple and gold of Rome's pageantry and the gleaming whiteness of her pillared palaces, a sojourner in the Imperial City, who had but that day sailed up the River Tiber, stood waiting beneath the shadow of the She-Wolf. The stranger, a Phœnician who had at one time done stone cutting at Tyre and Sidon, had not long to wait. The man who met him wore the dull brown tunic of the working man. A scarlet cord bound his waist and he carried a covered bundle. Speaking in Latin, he addressed a few words to the Phœnician and then said, "Follow me."

For a time the working man, whose present occupation was that of torch-lighter, led the visitor through the streets of the city, the surrounding scenes changing until from the marble palaces of the Palatine their way led them past the slave pens at the lower end of Via Sacra, and shortly after they found themselves traveling a roadway on the Campagna. Here they often found it necessary to step aside to make passageway for carts loaded with Pozzolana sand. It was toward the pits from which this sand came the two were making their way and it was not until they had turned into deserted pitroad that they entered into free conversation.

"Shortly," said the guide, "we will enter into the way which leadeth to the burial place of slaves, some of which are thrown in dead, and some not yet dead but only worthless. From its corruption ariseth a stench that ceaseth not day nor night."

"Do we go that way?"

"Nay. Yet were it well for a *kurios* to see to what ignoble ends one of like desires with himself can come, and for no crime save the lack of freedom to be better than a slave. Another day thou mayest see. Now we must hasten where we go. The mouth of the subterranean passage opens just ahead. The way will be narrow when we reach the corridor leading into the *tufa* rock. I guide thee this back way, and longer, that thou mayest pass the prison where my fellow working man and thy brother, oft are thrown into."

As they made their way into the subterranean passage, the light of day faded into a small pale spot and then went out, leaving the gloom of midnight ahead. "The path beneath thy feet is smooth. The walls are so close thy hand on either side can feel the way. There is no water nor living beast to fear. When we reach the first chamber, we will find a torch burning with which to light other torches. Follow me."

A faint glow, like a star against the pitch black, told them they were near the chamber where the spark, as they entered, grew into the dim light of a

torch which cast a yellow circle on the rock floor. Here the guide opened his bundle and took out two torches which he lit. Handing one to the Phœnician he said, "Watch well thy step and keep thou at my heels. We go down into a huge grotto quarried in the bowels of the earth. Its passages are cut through sharp cornered rocks between which thou must squeeze thy body, and yet other rocks stick out into the darkness like the bristles of a mad boar. Beware these bristles! If thou shouldst run against one, thy feet will stumble over the edge of the abyss. Once thou hast fallen into it, no more forever will thine eyes behold the light of day. Hold tight thy lamp. Watch well thy step."

Carefully they made their way down, and down, and around the sharp rocks in silence. Once they stopped and the guide said, "Stand close against the wall. Just beyond thy feet lieth the hole of live tombs that is a prison. From it was quarried rich material to build palaces for masters. And the hole that was left of their labor hath often made good prison for the workmen who quarried, when found guilty of the crime of planning freedom."

Like parasital mites making their intestinal way the two men followed the windings of the narrow, black corridor until they came into another chamber where, from a grotto in the wall, oil was taken to replenish the torch cups.

"There is now a long journey before thee," the

torch-bearer said. "Many and devious windings will take thee up and down, back and across the Campagna that doth lie, with its cart burdened roads, fifty feet above our heads. By the light of thy lamp thou wilt see the walls change. No longer are they sharp, nor are there bottomless pits, for soon we enter the sleeping place of those whose bodies toil no more nor their hearts hunger for the freedom that belongs to every man."

It was as the guide had spoken. By the flickering light of the smoking torch, the eyes of the Phœnician soon caught the white lines of skeletons lying in grottoes and niches cut tier above tier in the side walls of the narrow corridors. After walking several miles they arrived at a large chamber with massive stone arches, crudely cut, reaching to a dome-shaped ceiling. Here paintings decorated the walls, and images of popular gods and goddesses were set in niches, and models of sculpture on pedestals. One side wall of the large room was lined with slabs, some with inscriptions and others carved with the notes of music. Several torches burning on high standards gave the chamber a soft light. From it lead five passageways opening, like dark mouths, into unknown byways.

"Here we tarry, while I strengthen the lights," said the torch-bearer. "This is the headquarters of the union of all those who chant hymns, take part in the Olympic games, dance after the manner of

satyrs and play the Greek trilogies. A league of fun-makers they are. Also these actors do lay claim to the greatest of all antiquity for their order, saying that no less a one than Homer himself did found it. Also they make claim to being the first of all baptists and their speech-makers will prove into your ears that Dion, the forerunner of their Dionysus, did first initiate with it, and how that all the Phrygian Brotherhoods were baptists."

"Do they baptize now?"

"Yea, yea. Every Brotherhood of them all whose torches I light doth initiate with the bath of purification. This is as necessary as the common table of communion around which they all sit. The Brotherhood of Actors and Fun-makers is one of the strongest, and least often disturbed with dissension."

"Doth dissension come even into a brotherhood?"

"Art thou a *kurios* and knowest not this?" the torch-bearer asked quickly.

"It hath been so in Syria and Phœnicia, yet I hoped in Rome to find this evil remedied."

"Human nature is the same in Rome as in Syria. Yet there is always a way in a brotherhood to keep peace. Did not the 'Medici' stir up strife when the 'Mulo Medici' would join the Brotherhood saying these latter would bring ridicule to their honorable order? And did not the *kurios* say to them that so

long as their fellow beings were allowed to live no better than mules, there was the greater need of having them in the Brotherhood. And when the gold and silver workers stirred up strife because the rag-pickers would come into the union, did not the *kurios* point out that, under an autocracy of masters they themselves might be picking rags on the morrow? But the actors and fun-makers have not yet wrangled. To-night a man from Delphi maketh a speech when this tablet is erected," and he turned out the face of a marble slab which leaned against the wall. "With great pride do these actors and musicians and dancers claim Delphi which they say still nestles at the foot of Mount Parnassus; a place where gorgeous birds spread rainbow wings over fragrant flowers, and everlasting springs feed the stream that foams and tumbles past the ruins of Apollo's temple. But the torches are now made ready."

"And what is the tablet?"

The two men examined it. Delicately cut in the marble was the face of a young girl, with flutes beside her. Three rows of curls hung from her wreath-bound head, and her lips were parted in a merry smile. "A dancing girl and her pipes," the guide said. "She belonged to the union and getteth burial and a memorial. But let us be going. Take up thy torch."

After no long walk the corridor ran into another chamber. "This is a place of initiation into some

mystery," the torch-bearer said. "Wouldst see?" and he pointed across the room to an opening in the wall near the floor, scarce large enough for the body of a man to worm its way through. "Look thou beyond it," and the guide held his torch toward the opening.

The Phœnician hesitated. Then he dropped on his knees and thrust his shoulders into the hole. By the dim light he saw something on the floor which at first seemed to be the body of a man lying with feet close together and arms straight extended. A second look showed this man-like object to be a heavy cross of wood. At its side an open grave.

"What meaneth it?" the Phœnician asked, backing out of the hole.

"I know not save that those who enter there come wearing white and carrying green sprigs, and with them one not wearing white. And when they go, all but one who wears white and he who wore not white go out. Three days later these two go also both wearing white. Nothing more know I save that I be given orders at times to make the light. But let us hasten on to the big chamber."

Between a seemingly endless labyrinth of galleries lined with closed coffins and shelved skeletons the two passed until at last a great noise, like a far-off droning, broke the stillness. "The meeting hath begun," the guide said. As they neared the chamber they encountered guards to whom the

guide gave a pass-word; and again before they entered, other guards demanded a sign which was given by a grip of the hand. Once inside, the Phœnician pushed gently through the circle assembled to a place near the front.

"Hourly do you pray," the speaker was saying. "Yea, hourly for relief. But the cycles of the years roll on in blood and pain while the heel of Rome grinds into brute servility all save a favored few. Even have women by the hand of Rome been stripped naked, their legs painted, their bodies shackled and thrown into caverns where, with pick in hand, they dug stones from the rock to build palaces for brutes. If the gods yet live why do they not hear the bitter crying of the helpless when the branding iron is laid to the flesh until slave pens smell like cook shops? Why do not the gods hear the cries of humankind fed on pods and roots and skins, beaten with clubs and hung on crosses, for no evil save honest toil for thankless masters?

"Oppression hath grown mighty until all the world is divided into two classes, the slave who toileth and the master who remaineth idle. Millions are there of the one—few of the other. Yea, for their very number are toilers counted as beasts. Since Cæsar brought his fifty and three thousand slaves from far Gaul hath slaves come to be in numbers like the sands of the sea. On the market when their bones have become stiff are they not sold for

food to fatten eels for Roman Senators? And those who escape being food for tigers and hyenas, or nailed to a cross, are they not lost in the fearful pit of pollution of the Esquiline Cemetery? And in the arena—were not eight thousand gladiators slaughtered in one year?

"A sweeper of the amphitheatre was I. Mine was the task of dragging from the arena dead gladiators, shoveling up the blood, sprinkling fresh sand over dark spots yet warm, sharpening swords and javelins for fresh encounters and cutting off heads when the death rattle was too slow sounding. Often have I lifted mine eyes from the sands dyed red to the glitter and pomp above, and have said, 'Who payeth for all this? Who payeth for the striped-backed and spotted-bellied beasts? Who payeth for the shining pythons and the wild bulls that toss bare bodies until from their bleeding wounds long entrails hang while bejeweled women and swine-snouted men cheer? Who payeth for the silver cages that house Numidian lions? Who payeth for the tanks of perfume in which naked women sport to please licentious eyes? Who payeth for the purple and the emerald—the palace and the villa? And who for the olive oil and the wine that Cæsar doth give to the populace to win him favor?"

"In the slave pens of Via Sacra find I my answer, The *articulata implemente* of Rome payeth for all these things whether this jointed implement

be bound or free. And who would keep the slave and working man forever under the heel of the master? What meant the relentless war that Cicero did wage against the working class? Because of his Pagan belief in the divine rights of the *gens* families and a like strong belief that he who toileth hath no right to freedom, did he make war. And for like reason is war still upon us until, like rats, we burrow into the belly of the earth, and were it not for the Jus Coeundi that doth allow free organization for religious and death ceremonies, would we and our Brotherhood perish on a forest of crosses. Yet starved, we struggle! Beaten, we toil! Damned, we hope! Believing that out of Brotherhood will come the Liberty for which we die, we hold ourselves together. That which sitteth on the Seven Hills above us rotteth at the core. Signs are fast ripening of a change. Egyptian wisdom doth tell us the Phœnix is about to spring again to birth from her ashes. Somewhere is the savior and his coming shall be swift and terrible as lightning."

As the arena-cleaner made reference to the coming of a world savior, the Phœnician pushed himself before the *kurios* and when the last word had been uttered he said in a voice that filled the chamber vault, "Hear! Hear!" and he lifted his arm and pointed into the face of the orator. As he did so his sleeve fell back disclosing on his arm, a fish with a lion's head and a circle in its mouth.

All eyes were turned on the stranger as the *kurios* spoke, "Who art thou and whence hast thou come?"

"A *kurios* of Sidon I am. From afar have I journeyed to bring the glad news that one hath arisen mighty in power and wisdom to succor the oppressed. Hear ye what the spirit of the gods hath anointed him to do: Preach the gospel to the poor—heal the broken-hearted—give deliverance to the captives—sight to the blind and LIBERTY to the bruised and enslaved! Twice already hath a great and mighty following sought to crown him King, and he would not!"

"Whence cometh he?" a dozen eager voices asked.

"From the province of Galilee, in Palestine, and when cometh again the Passover of the Jews, when Jerusalem, that great city, is thronged with the population of the world, then shall he be made King —King of the People—the toiling people! And this King shall break every shackle on every human body and free from cave and dungeon, every human soul. But one thing there remaineth to determine. This is the added strength of Roman legions in Jerusalem at the Passover. Would that the gods could let us know the mind of Pilate!"

As he spoke these words, one who had eagerly listened moved from the rear toward him. The man stood head and shoulders above any other of

the number and his face was disfigured with a deep and desperate scar across one cheek. He listened intently as a speech-maker said to the Phœnician:

"And is this Galilean wiser and braver than Sparticus? Did not this noble lover of human liberty slay Roman legions as a fierce wind strikes down forest leaves? And yet was he not at last hacked to bits and his loyal followers hung on crosses to fatten birds of prey?"

"Aye, but Sparticus was betrayed by one of his own," a voice called.

"So will the Galilean be betrayed," came the reply.

"The Galilean hath a great following of men strong and zealous who would go with him to the death."

"Were not the Lusitanians strong and brave? Was not Lusitania ravished and stripped? And who remained after the massacre of Galba? Success cometh not by uprising but by forming one great brotherhood which, when formed, will command all power."

The discussion following these different opinions had scarce begun when the torch-bearer touched the Phœnician on the arm saying, "Thou hast opened the gates of controversy, yet we can not tarry to the end. Follow thy guide."

As they turned to go, the visitor felt his hand caught in a mighty grip and turned to see a scarred

face gazing intently upon him. "Thou hast looked upon his face—the face of Jesus?" he asked the Phœnician in a whisper.

"Yea. In the home of his brethren have I been with him. But what dost thou know of this Jesus?"

"That which my heart knoweth, my lips can not express save that I love him. And in your ear would I whisper the knowledge you much desire."

"Let us move into the dark," the torch-bearer said, and they left the chamber. Under a sealed shelf of bones they stopped. The scarred man of great size and the bearded Phœnician stood in the dim light of the torch held at a little distance, by the bearer.

"This thou couldst know," said the man of the scar. "The strength of the Roman legions will not be in Jerusalem at the time of Passover. Weak will be the forces of the Tower of Antonio."

"How knowest thou this?" and there was eagerness in the question.

"My lips are sealed further. Yet as I love the Galilean, my words come to thee from the mouth of official Rome."

"Wilt thou be at the Passover?"

"That is my hope."

"And wilt thou lend aid in making the Galilean a king?"

"He is already a king—and more."

The Phœnician looked inquiringly into the calm eyes of the unknown.

"King of my heart he is." The words were offered as an explanation. "Whether there is wisdom in acclaiming him a king over mankind, I know not. From his own lips would I get my 'Yea' or 'Nay.'"

CHAPTER XX

THE LITTLE TALLITH

AFTER Jael, the fisherman, had seen the warring waves of the Sea of Galilee calmed by an exercise of universal power, self-centered, the desire of his heart had been to see again the childhood friend he had called king. This, however, did not come about for a number of months. Shortly after the storm, the Galilean Prophet had gone on a long pilgrimage, rumor only telling where. Moved by his great hope for the healing of Sara and impatient at long delay, Jael, when he chanced to hear that Jesus had turned his face homeward, forsook his nets, and burdened by no more possessions than his staff and the scrip he hung over his shoulder, he set out on the Damascus road leading north. As he went he inquired of travelers along the way for one Jesus, a Galilean Prophet. But it was not until he reached Magdala that he got news. Here he overheard a party of pilgrims who stopped for the night, telling about a wonder worker who was camping on the Plain of Gennesaret a few miles to the north.

The blind son of one of the party had received almost instant sight by the application of clay to his eyes at the hands of this wonder worker.

With this information Jael hurried forward toward the Plain, sore of foot, yet glad of heart, for he had no doubt the wonder worker was Jesus. As he journeyed the twilight gave way to the dark, and innumerable stars came forth. But it was not a light in the heavens the eye of the fisherman watched for, rather a red glow near the earth line. When he finally saw this it was as strength to his tired feet. Soon the outlines of a tent became visible and the bodies of two men lying by the fire. The approach of Jael was announced by the barking of a dog which kept him at a distance until repeated shouting brought a sleepy man to the tent door.

"Doth there rest here a Galilean, by name Jesus?" the fisherman called.

Before the tent dweller had answered, one of the men by the fire called, "Jael! Jael—come hither!"

Forgetting the blisters on his feet, the stiff muscles of his legs and the savage barking of the dog, Jael ran to the man by the fire shouting, "Yea, Lord! I come! I come!"

With his head lying against his hand which was in turn supported by an elbow resting on the ground, Jesus lay in his undergarment, his traveling coat thrown over a tent stake near by. "Sit thee down and rest, Jael," he said. "The friend at my side is

a Hindoo of great wisdom and knowledge of the stars. When I traveled in far lands he was to me as a brother. Well be it thy steps have led thee to cross his path while he travels with this caravan if thou wouldst gather knowledge of Sara."

"Sara!" Jael exclaimed. "By what mystery is the desire of my heart known to thee ere my lips have spoken?"

"Mystery?" Jesus repeated. "There is no mystery. There is only understanding."

"Thy words have a sound but their meaning I know not, if thou art not a miracle worker."

"All mind is one mind. He who knoweth himself knoweth also his brother. If I loved the maiden Sara as thou lovest her, would not the desire of my heart give me an understanding of the desire of thy heart?"

"If thou dost know a man's love for a maiden, then wilt thou of thy man pity and thy god-power, give aid to Jael?"

"Hast thou aught of the maiden's which lay upon her naked body?" Jesus said.

From his coat Jael took a small bit of cloth suspended like an ornament on a neck cord and holding it toward Jesus said, "Her little *tallith.*"

"Put it in the hand of the Wise Man."

Drawing himself into a sitting position, the Hindoo took the *tallith,* pressed it into the palm of his hand and sat for a short time without speaking.

"Her hair was abundant and dark," he presently said, speaking more to himself than to Jael. "Her face was ruddy and her eyes were bright like water dancing on quick waters. She was supple of body and worked among fish-nets. Overcome in a great struggle she was borne away and made unclean of body and hopeless at heart. She wandered about, an outcast, in the land of her fathers until at last she crept away to die."

A curse broke from the lips of Jael and his hand moved quickly toward his belt as he exclaimed, "When I find him—! But first I must find *her*. Where is Sara now?"

"Even now doth she lie in a bed of rushes which the waves of Jordan have washed against a bleaching sycamore. Here, while she waiteth death, the serpent that hath wrought her downfall doth circle her though she knoweth it not."

"God of my fathers!" Jael groaned.

"What is thy request, Jael?" Jesus asked.

"That Sara be made clean and given again to Jael."

"Dost thou know what thou asketh? From thee the woman hath been taken by the serpent. If thou wouldst possess her, to the place of the serpent must thou go and conquer him. Then shall the woman be free and with the freedom of the woman shall come thy victory. Wouldst thou go?"

"Yea, yea! Direct my pathway."

"Hear then the words of the Wise Man of the East."

"Lift thine eyes to the heavens," the Hindoo said. "Seest thou Seven Stars where they shine in their constellation?"

"Nay. But six I see."

"Look again."

"My eyes behold six."

"Thou must see seven."

After keeping his face to the sky some minutes Jael exclaimed, "Another shineth afar. This is seven."

"The way thou takest will lead thee from the place of Seven Stars to the place of the serpent. Look thou well into the eyes of the stars. And when thou dost look into the snake's eyes that ever glitter, remember that all light be one light though according to its use it hath contrary powers."

He held the little *tallith* against his forehead for a moment with upturned face and said, "Thou wilt start thy journey under seven stars. When they fade from the heavens stop by the roadside and take thy rest in sleep. Thou wilt be awakened by the flutter of wings and on opening thy eyes will see six birds. Follow their flight with the eye and thou wilt look to the east from whence cometh the light. Keep thee on the highway toward Bethsaida. When the sun is well risen shall thine eyes behold five palms, strong and stately. When thou comest near

thou shalt see children playing where the tall palms cast their shades. They shall be chasing lambs and throwing lilies and shouting with glad voices. As thy feet pause here, remember this: All life is one life. Beside this there is no other whether it seem to thine eye a palm tree, a shouting child, a ewe lamb or a lily. Think on this as thou, the man, doth seek the desire of thy heart, thy woman.

"When thou hast passed through Bethsaida and come out upon the other side thou wilt overtake a herdsman driving four shabby and much smelling goats. And the hands of the man shall be like unto the hoofs of the beast for filth and his visage shall be like that of a wild he-goat. Of this man inquire if there are those unclean beyond Bethsaida and of his reply learn that a beast be not told by the number of his legs.....

"When thou dost draw near Capernaum three geese will seek to turn thee aside. Thy toes will they peck at with much hissing and the hem of thy garment will their necks lift angry beaks to. Tarry not, neither kick nor curse them. They are but birds to tempt the foolish. Waste not thy effort on them.....

"When thou hast cleared the North Gate of this city, keep to the Damascus road until it reach the walls of Chorazin. When thou reachest the South Gate of the city two dogs shall draw nigh. And the one shall be hairy and water-eyed; and the

other shall be lean and warty. And when thou passeth under the gate shall they likewise pass under, the one before thee and the one behind. Close to the wall on the inside shall the fore dog trot. Keep thou in his tracks. He goeth to a fish stall. When thy feet reach this fish market let thine eyes look for a hag that doth sit near a dung heap taking the heads from fish. When she seeth the dogs she will curse. Then shalt thou help her drive the dogs away and she shall speak. Forget not what she saith of the marsh path, and beyond.

"When thou hast left Chorazin keep thee going until thou hath passed a peasant thrashing with the drag. Here turn aside from the road to the right and go straight until thou comest to a grove of carib trees. Now rest thy feet but use thine eyes and ears. Thou art not far from the Jordan. Searching to the right thine eyes will see the willows on the banks and thine ear will hear the fall of water over stones. To the right of the caribs turn and soon thou shalt come to a marsh. Remember now the words of the hag and shortly shall the waters of the Jordan greet thy eye. Thou wilt see a place beyond a flat stone where the waters lie quiet as in a basin. Yet beyond this is a bed of rushes washed against a dead sycamore. In the leaves look thou for the serpent. In the bed lieth the woman whose enemy, though she knoweth it not, doth encircle her. Like two sparks broken from

the sun will the eyes hidden in the rushes look into thy eyes. From the Seven Stars to the Serpent hast thou now made thy way. If thou be victorious over the serpent, back to the stars will thy feet be turned. If thy faith fail utterly, the serpent will have victory over both man and woman and there will come death instead of life."

"At thy strange words I wonder—but—" and he turned to Jesus: "Thou art the King—thou art the wonder worker. By what means shall I gain victory over this serpent that hath Sara encircled?"

"This be the victory—even thy *faith,* Jael," Jesus answered. *"What things soever thou desirest when thou prayeth, believe that thou hast them and they shall be thine.* To the woman, which I bid thee bring again to me, carry thou this gospel of salvation—'As a man thinketh in his heart, *so is he.*' There is no bondage to uncleanness or to darkness when the mind of man thinks purity and light. He who thinks *Strength* is at last a *Conqueror.* Take now thy little *tallith* and if thy faith fail thee, from the touch of it may new strength come. Go, Jael."

According to directions Jael made his way. He was aroused by the sweep of wings passing toward the east. He heard the children singing underneath the palms and beyond Bethsaida he overtook the herdsman.

"Are there those unclean beyond the city?" he asked him.

"Nay, for with dogs and staves drive we the unclean away. Sad was the plight of the last who came this way. A woman she had once been. Now came she like a creeping thing, lean of flesh, eaten of sores, and when the dogs and staves of the city rabble had driven her far, then did my goat with the broken horn butt her into a sharp ravine."

"Was her right leg swollen at the knee?"

"Yea, and the goat did break it with his head."

"And her right arm—had it sores?"

"Yea, sores until blow flies chased her even down there among the rocks, and as she did lie, with a stone I broke her foul arm open! A curse upon the scar-ridden bones of the unclean!"

"Verily a beast is not known by the number of his legs," said Jael angrily as the herdsman turned across the plain.

When the fisherman reached Chorazin, the lean and warty dog led him to the place where the hag gutted fish. When she saw the lean dog and the hairy one which followed, she cursed.

"Vile dogs they are, yet there is one thing worse. Scarce a fortnight ago and before the dawn of morning, there was a stirring up of the lentil pods and melon skins cast upon the ground. And when the man of the house looked out, in the light of the moon beheld he a sight fearful to the eye, for one did cry 'Unclean! Unclean!' Wrapped was this evil one in a fisherman's coat yet was she a woman.

Then did we shower her with fish long spoiled and with bitter curses, and she crept away. On the evening of the next day came a pilgrim who did tell that he saw one eaten alive of disease and uncleanness, creeping through the marsh toward the Jordan. Feebly did she crawl as if life were all but departed. And if she die not in the marsh then will the life be sucked from her by serpents, for beyond the marsh dwelleth such snakes as creep against the bodies of living things to seek warmth and take from them the life that goeth to make the wisdom of the serpent." And when she had said this, the hag returned to her fish cleaning.

With a sad heart Jael turned from her, yet not without hope. He hastened on, keeping to directions. He saw the willows by the watercourse and heard the murmur of the river. He cleared the marsh. He came to the still pool. He saw the bed of rushes piled by the spring flood against the bleached sycamore. All was as pictured by the Wise Man of the East. Softly he made his way toward the bed of rushes with eyes keenly watching for the serpent. When he had come near he stopped. A sore and loathsome hand lay over the top of the bed of rushes. Underneath it two bright sparks suddenly appeared. Looking close Jael saw the head of a serpent and that its body lay concealed under the leaves, yet so like its surroundings was it that it seemed to be but a part of them.

The eye of the serpent was both cunning and evil. Under its first glitter Jael took a backward step. Emboldened by this move the serpent thrust out a barbed and rapidly scintillating tongue. Instinctively the fisherman thrust his fingers against the little *tallith*, the touch of which aroused in him a mighty passion, for in the face of the serpent he now saw the lust of the Roman who had taken Sara. A swift and terrible wrath swept over him. He drew his knife and with an oath sprang forward. As he did so there was a soft rustling of dead rushes—and the sparks of light and the twinkling tongue were gone and though he did not notice it, the hand resting just above where the venomous head had lain, was trembling violently.

"Lord, I believe!" shouted Jael in trumpet tones. "Help thou mine unbelief!"

The ringing voice broke the stillness sharply. It was an echoing wail that called from behind the rushes, "Unclean! Unclean!"

"Knowest thou not who standeth near thee? Sara, lift up thy head!"

Slowly a head appeared above the bed of rushes. Dark eyes were sunken deep in an emaciated and ashy face. "Jael!" The name was called with great effort in a thin and rasping voice. "Unclean, Jael!"

"Nay, nay, my Sara!" he shouted with a glad voice. "Thou art not unclean! Jesus of Nazareth

hath cleansed thee already if in thy heart thou believest thou art clean. He hath bidden me bring thee to him, clean, *clean.*"

"Thou hast come too late!" the wailing voice called back. "Thou canst do nothing for me."

"Nay. Nothing can I do. But he—Jesus of Nazareth—can do all things. He hath all power on sea and land, in air and sky, in heaven and hell! There is nothing this wonder worker can not do. Lift up thine arms as thou wilt lift them before his face when thou comest into his presence. Clap thy hands! Open thy mouth and shout! Shout, Sara!"

For a moment there was silence only broken by the running water of the Jordan. Then the stillness was again broken by a scream and the one word, "Jael!" The cry came from the bed of rushes and was in strong contrast to the rasping effort of the moment before. "Jael! Jael!" Again the sharp scream.

"What is it, my Sara?"

"My flesh is coming clean! What meaneth it?"

"Jesus of Nazareth is here. My eyes be holden that I can not see, yet I *feel* him."

"Jael! Jael!" Again it was a scream—a wild, glad, unearthly scream. "My strength is returning. It is pouring into me like sunshine. Jael! My knee! My legs! They are coming clean under my very eyes! Run to me. Hurry! Hurry else the miracle thou mayest not see! The flesh cometh

clean *fast.* Fast! And the breath of healing bloweth over the running sores! See! They are drying! Look, like scales they are dropping away!"

Before Jael reached the bed Sara had risen on her knees.

"My Jesus!" he shouted in a voice that made the valley ring as he met her face to face. "Sara! Thou art made *whole!*"

Even as he spoke she lifted herself with a great shout and left the nest of rushes for the arms of Jael. For a moment he held her as if between the woman and destruction there remained nothing but his arms. Yet the lips of them both were dumb in the first moments of the miracle. Then he held her at arm's length and looked into her face.

"Thou art Jael—surely Jael," she said, "but am I Sara?"

"Yea, yea. And every whit made whole. Feel thou thy hair. Feel thou thy ruddy cheeks. Feel thou thy supple arms and strong young hands as when they tossed the nets," and he drew his fingers over her hair and face and arms.

Again she stood unable to speak. She looked back to the empty bed of rushes and into the face of Jael.

"Feel for thyself," and taking her hand he made it stroke her long hair.

"Let mine eyes bear me witness," and turning toward the still pool she ran fleet footed, and

dropped on her hands and knees beside it. So long and carefully she bent above the water, Jael came beside her and looked in to see there her mirrored face. "Look, Jael," she whispered. "Seest thou a face?"

"Yea, thy face, clean and whole."

"Nay—not mine. There is one altogether fair and more beautiful than tongue can tell. It seemeth to look out from mine as though it had always been there, yet it is not mine, but another. My soul telleth me this mighty Jesus hath taken possession of thy Sara."

A moment they tarried by the pool of the Jordan. Then Sara sprang up exclaiming, "Jael—I love thee! I love thee! But there is another I love with a strong love that tongue can not speak. Come! Let us hasten with winged feet to Jesus of Nazareth. Before his face would I shout the joy of my salvation!"

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER PASSOVER

THE year between the Passover feasts of 32 and 33 A. D. had been a busy and eventful one in the Bethany household where Jesus made his home during much of the time of his Judean teaching. Out of his frequent visits and the thoughtful ministrations of Mary and Martha had come an intimacy that had cemented the bands of love between them, while Lazarus and the young Rabbi, close as brothers, studied the Law and the Scriptures together.

Through the year Martha and Joel had been making preparations for their marriage which was to take place soon after the Passover and in this wedding Jesus was deeply interested. But the one great event of the year had been the death and resurrection of Lazarus. This strange event had not only been the miracle talk of the home, but it had been widely discussed in Jerusalem.

Passover guests were beginning to throng the highways leading to Jerusalem, and the home at

Bethany was set in order for the coming of Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus of Galilee, who were again to be guests of Lazarus. Martha and Joel sat in the big window talking over their own affairs while Mary and Lazarus stood by the table looking over a scroll, all four meantime, listening for the approach of their guests.

"Is it not strange," Lazarus said, "that in the name of those who were stoned yesterday for being prophets, the prophets of to-morrow are stoned to-day."

"There are no good prophets but dead prophets," Mary answered.

"So it seemeth," and Lazarus turned to the scroll and began to read. "The ox knoweth—" The words were interrupted by a knocking at the door which both Mary and Lazarus hastened to answer.

"It is Joseph of Arimathea," said Lazarus.

"Perhaps Jesus cometh first," Mary replied, laughing.

The door was thrown open to Joseph who was greeted warmly, relieved of his cloak and seated for foot-washing.

"Aye, but we are glad to have thee," Lazarus said, shaking his hand.

"The year hath been long since we saw thee last," Mary said, and Martha added, "Thou dost honor us to be our Passover guest."

"The blessing of God be on thee, my daughters,

and thou, Lazarus. And, Joel, it seemeth I saw thee here also at the last Passover."

"Yea, indeed," laughed Lazarus. "And art like to find him here next Passover, eh, Martha?" and his laughter called forth a response of merriment from the company.

Before the face of Lazarus had yet straightened into its accustomed good-natured lines, Joseph was looking intently upon it.

"Lazarus, my young friend," he said, stroking his long white beard, "for one that hath been dead thy voice beareth strange meaning. Yea, verily, my ears can not believe what my eyes behold. Of much people have I heard of thy coming from the tomb where thou hast lain four days. Now would I hear from thy lips of this miracle. Wast thou of a surety dead?"

"So sayest those who did entomb me."

"And yet do I see thee alive," and his hand came to a rest on his flowing beard as he studied Lazarus.

"So do I bear witness," Martha said, laughing. "Though it has been weeks since the strange thing came to pass, yet doth he devour food as doth the grasshopper that eateth clean the face of the earth."

"Ha! ha! Four days be a good fast to one not given to fasting," Lazarus replied to Martha.

"Herein is a marvel," and the hand of Joseph still lay quiet against his beard. "Thou sayest thou wert dead?"

"Nay. I said those who did entomb me so said."

"The Law doth teach," and Joseph moved his hand down his beard slowly, "that when the sword of death doth enter the soul of man from its cruel point doth a drop of corruption enter into the flesh, of which death maketh more corruption. The sword of death did enter thy soul, but not the drop of corruption?"

"Of this I bear testimony," Martha quickly answered. "I feared greatly to have the tomb opened lest the stench of corruption should sicken the mourners."

"And there was no stench?" said Joseph, turning to Martha.

"None save the odor of grave spices."

"Then of a fact there must be death from which there is an awakening."

"Yea, surely." It was Lazarus who answered. "In days of old did not the prophets make some to sneeze and sit up on their biers while others might not sneeze for all the prophets?"

"Much have I heard of prophets raising the dead. Yet had none turned to corruption."

"Even Jesus doth make no claim of bringing back to life those whose flesh hath turned black."

Joseph made no reply to the last speech of Lazarus, but turned to Mary and said, "What thinketh thou?"

"As my brother hath spoken," she replied. "There is one death, and there is another death. Into one hath corruption entered. Into the other it hath not. Hath not Jesus made this plain? Yet because of their ignorance do the people not understand. When he did enter the house of Jarius, synagogue ruler at Capernaum, to raise his daughter, did he not tell them plainly the damsel was not dead? Yet wept they and howled. And when he sought to quiet them by again saying, 'She sleepeth only,' did they laugh him to scorn. But when he did take the little damsel by the hand and bid her arise, she awakened. Then did the shout go up, 'A miracle! A miracle!' The Master doth thus teach there is a death from which the sleeper may be awakened. How cruel it is to seal such dead in the tomb!"

"Thou hast spoken, Mary," Joseph answered. "Fearful it is." Then he turned to Lazarus. "Canst tell how thy soul did feel as thou didst pass into the state of the dead?"

"Of feeling I had no knowledge. The incantations of the physician grew feeble as the buzzing of a bee. The pleading of Martha reached my ears like a child's call over a vast mountain, and the eyes of Mary, rimmed in tears, did sink into darkness like stars in a far sky and then go out. Yea, sight, sound, feeling, even knowledge of my own soul faded away—for how long I know not. They do tell me it was four days. Once as I lay asleep I did

feel something like a cold flutter and faint touch across my cheek as in a dream, and from a great distance seemed to come the scent of spice. Then did something startle me. Aye, the blood in my veins which had refused to run, gave a mighty leap forward, there came a flood of air and a great burst of sunlight which did shine through my being, and I awoke and did walk from the tomb in obedience to the voice that called me forth—*it was the voice of Jesus.*"

Joseph shook his head slowly saying, "I understand not. Herein lieth a mystery."

"Yea, a mystery," Lazarus repeated.

"A mystery to those who understand not," Mary said. "But to the Master it seemeth to be no mystery. Once when I sat with him upon the housetop and marveled at the mystery of music, he did tell me that the soul of man is made of Waves of Being. Yet did I not understand until again he taught me. And this have I gathered of his wondrous wisdom—all Time and all Space, and all Power that moves therein is a Great Sea of Waves of Being. And the soul of man is like a tiny cupful of the Waves of Being, dipped from this sea that lieth between endless shores. And for a time these waves run to and fro in that which hath the form of a man. Then do they depart into another form that the eye beholdeth not. But whether these Waves of Being are making motion in the Great

Sea of the Universe or the soul of man, they are one and the same waves, so that from a great force without is a great force within played upon, and we call it a mystery. Yet, when he had told all this I did not understand clearly, nor when he called the Great Sea by the name of 'God' and the soul of man a little God. But when he called this Universal Sea of Waves of Being by the name of 'Love,' then had he reached my understanding, for under the teaching of Jesus, the Master, hath my own soul come to know a love boundless as the Sea of Being itself. Since God is love, and God is life, it cometh that *love* is life and according as a man loveth, be it much or little, so doth he possess the powers of life. So all things are possible according as one hath the power of loving. Is it strange therefore that to him who loveth as Jesus doth, uncommon power be given? There *is* a mystery. *It is the mystery of love.*"

"What eye is this that thou seest these things with, Mary?" Joseph asked, after a moment of silence.

"Sometimes," she answered, smiling, "methinks I have a third eye that hath long been sealed, but under the teaching of him whom we love, is opening to the light."

"Thou art a wise disciple."

"Much wisdom is required of those to whom much opportunity is given. Many of these things

are grave yet simple, even as the fulfillment of the Law by casting the Law aside is grave, yet simple."

"Mary," said Joel, "thy speeches ofttimes sound simple, yet are thy words like a keen blade in a soft kid case. Thy talk would disturb my peace of mind had I time to think on it."

"What doth now threaten to disturb thy peace of mind, Joel?" Lazarus asked.

"In the setting aside of the Law I see great danger, yet Jesus is ever so doing. Lo, it hath come to my ears that he hath declared no writing of divorcement be given by a man, save for one reason."

"Even so, what matter?" Lazarus asked.

"Hath it not been since the days of Moses that a man be the rightful head of the woman, and to him is given power to put her away when his judgment sees fit?"

"Yea, for spoiling his mutton."

"And what man chooseth to dine on spoiled mutton?"

"Or scorching his porridge?"

"Scorched porridge maketh not a sweet temper for a man."

"Or speaking back with a sharp tongue?"

"Shouldst not a woman's tongue be meek in the presence of her husband?"

"And in thine own memory," Lazarus said to Joel as a climax, "hath not a Rabbi put away an old

and faithful wife for a fresh and ruddy one, for no reason save her lack of freshness?"

"So doth the Law give man his right," Joel answered.

"And now cometh a Teacher who sayeth to this sort 'Nay!'" And Lazarus laughed, for concern was written on the face of Joel as he spoke again.

"Canst thou not see whereunto this liberty to women will lead? Aye, even there may come a time when women will be allowed to give a man a writing of divorcement."

"Even so,—ha! ha! If he doth beat her with a stick or refuse to feed her, let her do this to him."

"I look for the world to come to a speedy end when the Law and the traditions of the Elders are overturned," and Joel heaved a heavy sigh.

"The traditions of the Elders," Mary repeated. "Often hath the Master spoken of the Elders and their traditions. They claim to sit in the seat of Moses, knowing not that the seat of Moses did pass with the passing of Moses. As saw their fathers, so see they; as spoke their fathers, so speak they; as did their fathers, so try they to do, forgetting this, that as the times of their fathers have perished, so have perished their needs, and with the coming of new generations have come new needs. 'Harken not to these neither now nor in the days to come,' saith the Master. 'They be blind leaders of the

blind. Beware thou that man who boasts of changing not.'"

"I perceive that closely thou hast learned of Jesus. Tell me now, wherein, thinkest thou, lieth the secret that shall bring the Kingdom of which he doth ever speak?"

The question was asked Mary by Joseph. She said, "Once was I standing in the far end of the garden where the soil had been made soft for a row of mustard trees. And the seed lay upon the palm of my hand when Jesus did come softly behind me saying, 'What hast thou?' For answer I held forth my hand black with seed like dust. 'Watch thou, Mary,' were his words. 'As the tree doth come from the seed, so cometh the Kingdom.' Then went he on a long journey. Returning he did ask of my garden. Again did we walk to the far end where the wall was hidden by branching mustard trees. And as we drew near the flutter of wings greeted us, and over the garden wall to the olive trees flew the fowls of the air that had gathered in the mustard tree to eat its bright fruit and lodge in its branches. Then again did he speak of the Kingdom saying, 'Lo, from the life of the tiny seed thou held in thine hand hath come this more abundant life. Even so shall the Kingdom come from the seed sowing of Truth. Truth is—'" The words of Mary who had been sitting in the window came to a sudden stop. A step outside had attracted her attention.

She sprang up and hastened to put a fresh basin of water by the guest stool at the door. Then she went back to the window and piled cushions in a corner, making ready for a guest. Before she had finished Lazarus was laughing.

"When Mary's hand, without the goad of Martha's tongue, fall diligently to indoor labor, then know we who cometh."

CHAPTER XXII

BRIDAL CHAMBER TALK

MARTHA'S approaching marriage was of more interest to her than even the solemnity and feasting of the Passover. So it was that on a night preceding the great celebration, the conversation of Mary and Martha turned from the events of the day to a new bridal garment. In the sleeping-room were two handsome carved chests. Beside one of these Martha knelt, while Mary sat at a dressing-table taking down her hair for the night.

"Is not my Persian shawl beautiful and my Arabian veil fair to the eye?" Martha asked proudly, taking them from the chest.

"Yea, but thy robe is more beautiful."

Martha replaced the shawl and veil carefully in the chest and took from it a robe. She rose, draped the garment over her arm and held it under the lamp that burned by Mary's table. "Ah, Mary," she said with pride, "hast thou seen anything more gorgeous? Look thou at the threads of gold and silver and the blue and purple flowers."

"Yea, thou hast a treasure. Fair wilt thou be as a bride, and proud will beat the heart of Joel. And there will be merry music with wine and oil for those who gather along the way to see the procession, and nuts and sweetmeats for the children."

"And there will be myrtle branches and wreaths of flowers and dancing maidens with flowing hair and laughing mouths. But Martha will be the center of all eyes, in snowy veil; and voices all along the way will cheer and hands will clap."

"Yea," laughed Mary, "hands will clap for among the Jews doth not everything give way to a wedding procession and everybody make merry?"

"They say," Martha answered, as she brushed a speck of dust from a flower on her robe, "it was because she oft clapped her hands at wedding that only the hands of Jezebel were left when the dogs ate her flesh."

"So the old women like to tell, but it is no more true than that God had a wedding for Adam and Eve with Michael and Gabriel for groomsmen."

"These sayings sound well, Mary. Why declarest thou they are not true?"

"The understanding of my head doth tell me so. In the days of our fathers there was no marriage save that a man did go out and find her whom his heart loved and take her. If one were not enough, he took two. If two did not suffice, he took three."

"And if three were not enough," Martha observed, laughing, "he took a score."

"Yea, a score. Then thinkest thou our fathers had naught to do but make great processions?"

"Much I like the procession, the veil, the flowers, the sweetmeats and all this that maketh marriage."

"But all this maketh not the marriage, Martha. Naught but love hath power to make the marriage."

"Ever thou maketh much of love, Mary."

"The blessing of the priest can not take the place of it when a man and a woman unite to abide under one roof."

"Maybe so," Martha assented, going back to the chest, "but see thou my girdle of jewels from the Far East. Come thou and look once again at my goodly store. A long time have I been getting my chest filled against the day I am the bride of Joel."

"And an outfit thou hast worthy an Asmonean princess, while my chest hath little in it save my alabaster vase of very precious perfume."

"Fragrant will it make thy wedding veil."

"For this hope I treasure it. And yet—"

The words were stayed by a knocking at the door and the voice of Lazarus shouting in excitement, "Mary! Mary! Open to me the door. I have great news!"

"Yea—yea, we open," Mary answered. "Even the tomb door doth open to thee, my brother."

"Aye, but I have great news—great news!" he exclaimed as he crossed the threshold.

"But thou bearest a sword," Mary said, drawing back. "A sword! What of this sword?"

"Yea, what of the sword?" Martha repeated. "And what is the news?"

"Israel hath a King!" The words were shouted rather than spoken and the hand of Lazarus trembled with excitement against the hilt of the sword he carried.

"Israel hath a King? What meanest thou?" and the tone of Mary's voice showed that she had caught the spirit of excitement from her brother.

"Is the throne of David to be established?" and Martha tucked her jeweled girdle hastily into the chest as she asked the question.

"It is even so, Mary—Martha—and him whom we love hath been acclaimed King of the Jews!"

"Dost thou mean Jesus—*our* Jesus?" and Mary lay hold of her brother's sleeve with tight fingers.

"Jesus? The Galilean Rabbi that doth abide under *our* roof?" and Martha came hastily to the side of Lazarus.

"Yea—yea, verily. It is even this same Jesus!"

"My brother," and Mary stepped in front of him and looked into his eager smiling face, "what strange thing is this thou sayest? Ah, it is too strange that after the long, long years of Israel's bondage the King of the Jews hath come! And

stranger far than this if it *should be the Jesus we love.*"

"But I do swear to you I speak the truth. Thou shouldst have seen Jerusalem this day. Thou shouldst have heard the glad hosannahs to the King, shouted from ten thousand throats!"

"Thou makest my ears to burn!" Martha said, her face glowing with excitement.

"Nay, rather doth my heart burn with a fire of wondrous and holy joy," Mary said in trembling voice.

"And glad I am that our home hath been his stopping place and that I, Martha, have baked him sparrow pies."

"Rather thank Jehovah that we have been blessed with quiet hours of teaching ere all Israel doth make demands on his wisdom, as did our fathers on the wisdom of Solomon. But, Lazarus, what of the day? Last night he sat with us at meat and no word was spoken of a king. And this morning when thou and Jesus did turn thy faces to Jerusalem, was naught said of so grave a matter."

"Thou speakest the truth, Mary. This morning the Master had no thought of the near coming of the Kingdom, though twice had the people of Galilee called him to be King. But as we journeyed toward Jerusalem, as if it had been well planned, throngs came out from everywhere waving palms and tossing olive branches. Aye, it seemed a forest

of olive branches moved along the road and children threw flowers, and mighty was the shouting. As we drew near the city, Jerusalem, hearing the glad shouting, came forth to meet us and as the great gate was neared did the men of Israel spread their garments along the way as when the army of Jehu made a carpet of its coats. With victorious shoutings entered the procession beneath the city gates and with wild waving of palms was the King of the Jews heralded. Not in a hundred years hath the City of Zion witnessed such a sight and the noise of shouting was at times like thunder. Near mine own ear did a zealot shout until methought the top of my skull was tumbling in. And with his shouting did he wave an old red rag which he shook fiercely, as he roared out, 'Thou art the King!' And with him was a woman, young and comely who likewise shouted saying, 'Hosannah! Praise his name!' keeping tight hold of the coat of the man, meantime, because of such a run of joyful tears as blinded her eyes. And these were but two of the multitude. Think ye, my sisters, that the Roman soldiers stood not aside when such a following did pass?"

"Aye, but I like the sound of thy speech," said Martha, smiling and clapping her hands.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Mary. "But the sword, why the sword?"

"The King hath been acclaimed, but the throne

hath yet to be established and swords shall the sons of Judah take up if there be need."

"The spears of Rome are sharp and held by matchless soldiery and Pilate is cruel as the grave and thirsting ever for the blood of Israel."

"Thou speakest, Mary. But when the people rise, even the legions of Rome stand back. Saw we not that this day? Just now the flower of Rome's strength in Palestine hath been sent to Assyria and ere the legions of the Imperial City could reach Jerusalem, will the Tower of Antonio and its stores be in possession of the Jews. With a handful of the following the Master had to-day a Maccabee would take Jerusalem from pagan hands. Shall the followers of him who is greater than David fall short? Rather let the arm of Israel be palsied than to fail when the Kingdom is in sight. Shout, my sisters, for the Kingdom is at hand!"

"Thrice glad am I my wedding garments are gorgeous enough for a king's court," Martha said.

"Talk of a king's court would be pleasant save for the glint of yonder sword. Lazarus, is there harm or danger for him we love in all this thou tellest?" and there was grave concern in Mary's face.

"There hath been dark mutterings and Pilate's wrath will be sore kindled by what hath taken place. But the sons of Judah are brave and the Lion of the Tribe shall prevail."

"Glad I am that ever I have given the Master

of the best wine and richest sop!" Martha exclaimed.

"My heart doth rejoice that while he was yet poor, our home hath been his. Even as our fathers did entertain angels unawares, so have we given shelter to a King," Mary said.

"Hath not thy heart from the beginning taken him for a King, Mary?" Lazarus asked. "Yea, even *thy* King?"

"Since first I saw him in the portals of the Temple have I loved him whom thou sayest is to be King."

"So! So!" shouted Martha, laughing. "Even more than a friend may I be to the King of the Jews, for doth not the Master love our Mary?"

"Methought thou hast feigned blindness these months," Lazarus said to Martha.

"Blind was I in the beginning since I took not notice of signs. But, brother, when thou didst die, my eyes came open. After thou hadst been dead four days, and the Master came, methought he would ask straightway concerning thy sickness that did take thee to the tomb, and that he would speak comfort. But not so. Of Mary did he straightway ask and to Mary did he bid me hasten, saying he had come. Aye, even though half Jerusalem had gone to thy grave to mourn did he have eyes for none. And when Mary did come—ah, that thou might'st have seen! At the feet of him did she fall

crying, 'Jesus—Jesus, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!' Tears wet her cheeks as she held her face to his and her voice broke with sobs. Then beholding her, he too did weep. And the Jews which looked on said, 'Behold, how much did he love Lazarus.' Yet did I know he wept not for thee, my brother, but rather because the heart of Mary was nigh broken with sorrow. Thus did the scales drop from my eyes and I did see that the Master loveth our Mary more than us all. So it seemeth good that I may be sister of the King of the Jews."

Mary clasped her hands and lifted her eyes, "The Lord be good!" she said softly. "The Lord be praised! Our brother hath been restored from the tomb and the Master hath been acclaimed King of the Jews, even as good Elizabeth prophesied a year ago."

"And while thou dost lift thy voice in praise, forget not that this is the downfall of that crafty fox of an Idumean who hath climbed to the throne of the Jews by one murder following another murder until the name of Herod is but a hiss. But his days are numbered now!"

While Lazarus had been speaking Martha had turned back to the carved chest and taken out the jeweled girdle. She held it toward Lazarus saying, "Thou hast not yet seen this, my brother, nor my veil."

Lazarus took the jeweled belt and laughed. "It is fine. Anything else, for it doth seem my eyes must behold thy finery before the Kingdom be discussed."

"Look here! See this!" and Martha improved the chance to interest her brother by taking again from the chest the shawl and the robe.

When he had hastily passed approval of them he turned to Mary and said: "Where is thy finery? Open thou thy chest and bring forth thy treasures also."

In reply Mary opened her chest and took out an alabaster vase of rare design. She laughed as she showed it to him saying, "This, my alabaster box of very precious ointment thou gavest me, is all my chest contains, and the seal of it remains unbroken. Yet do I treasure it against the day when it shall make my wedding veil fragrant as a field of lilies. When I am spoken for I will fill my chest with wedding garments as hath Martha."

"And if thou art spoken for by the King of the Jews, like a queen must thou be decked. Glad am I, my sister, that thou art fair. Aye, just now will I deck thee in my wedding garments and see thee shine," and Martha took from the chest a golden scarf, a spangled veil and some strings of beads. With the gold and spangled cloth she draped Mary. The jeweled girdle was coiled about her head like a crown and her flowing hair was hung with strands of shining beads.

When Martha had finished, Lazarus, who stood by looking on with interest, said, "Thou lackest a scepter, Mary. Take thou the sword," and he rested it against her knee and stood back with Martha to get the effect.

"God of our fathers!" Martha exclaimed with smiling face. "Among all the daughters of Jerusalem none is more fair than our Mary."

"But I like it not. Behold! A sword hath been given me and he that hath been called to bring the Kingdom doth ever teach those are blessed who make not war, but who bring peace. Take thou the sword. It doth savor of Rome, of battle-fields, cries of pain, black wings over far fields of death and little children crying for fathers who will come no more. Take thou the sword."

"Not even in the raiment of a queen canst thou forget the words of the Master. Thou art queer, Mary," Lazarus said as he took the sword.

"Nor do I like the heavy weight of jewels on my brow nor pearls hanging down my hair. Aye, Lazarus, hath not thy lips just passed the word that the poor breathe curses against Herod because that of their nakedness he doth wear jewels, of their starvation doth he fatten with rich food, of their misery doth come his ease even as these things come to Pilate and to Cæsar? Should one woman wear on her brow that for which the peasants of Galilee suffer and sweat and toil? Nay, nay. Not such a Kingdom preacheth the Master."

"Thou and the Master doth love peace. So did our father David. Yet was it not the will of God that he lift the sword most mightily? How can a Kingdom come without the sword?"

"I know not the manner of its coming, my brother. But the Kingdom the Master doth preach cometh first within the heart of man. And if the members of a man's life lift up the sword of disagreement between themselves, will the Kingdom be destroyed and not built up."

"I understand not the meaning of thy speech, my sister, and reason telleth me the Kingdom cometh by the sword."

"Great is the mystery of the coming of the Kingdom," Mary assented. "Yet there are hearts that understand what reason never knew or hath forgotten. But go thou now to rest. The day hath been full of wonders—and of weariness, as my eye can see in thy face though it doth glow with joy."

"Yea, the day hath been full of wonders and the morrow will be big with an event which shall be known throughout the earth. In thy dreams to-night, my gentle Mary, shout praises to the King, that thy lips may be shaped for great rejoicing when the new day cometh!"

CHAPTER XXIII

YE GENERATION OF VIPERS

FOR several days before the Passover celebration every highway leading to Jerusalem had been ground to fine dust by the hoofs of flocks and herds, and of slow asses laden with coops of doves and by the wheels of carts heavy with lambs—all moving toward the sacrificial knives of the Temple. By the morning of the day preceding that of the Great Feast, at an early hour all was life and excitement in the Outer Court of the Temple. Here booths and stalls had been erected for traffic in everything from oil and wine to graven earrings, and although such was forbidden, yet for more than half a century had the House of Annas grown rich from the tax on Temple traffic and no man had dared speak openly against it.

Not only was this income great, but there were yet greater returns from the tables of the money-changers. From all portions of the world came devout Jews to the Passover each contributing his compulsory half shekel tribute money. As this

tax money must by law be paid in Hebrew coin, the money-changing business was established and the favored ones who were allowed to operate in the Temple took the best places which they filled with chests and sacks of Hebrew money, mostly mites and farthings, and with unfilled boxes and bags in which to store the foreign coin taken in at an exorbitant exchange profit. While the tradesmen and stock drivers had begun early to prepare for a season of unusual profit making, the money-changers had not forgotten their interests. Indeed, this aristocracy of profit makers had held council but the night before and agreed on the price of exchange and the extra soldiery necessary for handling such troublesome strangers as might raise objections should a spurious coin lodge in an honest palm. Among the money-lenders none was more keenly alive to his own interests than Zador Ben Amon who by gift-giving and cunning had secured a place for his long table near the steps leading from the Outer Court up to the Beautiful Gate. In addition to this choice place of business, Ben Amon had a gold and silver shop on the other side of the Outer Court and half a dozen more scattered through the city. In each of these places he had trusted salesmen and trusted watchers all of whom he himself watched.

It was early on the morning following the day he

had been publicly proclaimed King with such a mighty demonstration, that Jesus made his way over Olivet from Bethany to Jerusalem. As was his pleasure oftentimes, he walked alone. The greater number who had followed him the day before were Galileans and those who camped with them beyond the city walls. These would not have business in the Temple until a later hour nor did he expect recognition that would give him any publicity from strangers or the busy tradesmen. Before the Golden Gate he paused and lifted his eyes. On each side were handsome pillars said to have been brought to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. But he was not thinking of these. Perhaps he heard the glad hosannahs ringing as they had sounded but a day before. Perhaps it was the bleating of young lambs he heard; perhaps the voice of a woman as she bade him not be late at the day's dinner where he was to be an honored guest.

Standing but a moment he passed under the gate and through the city streets to the Temple. As he entered the portals of Solomon's Porch the babel of many tongues, the ring of hammers and the hoarse shouting of cattle drivers reached his ear and prepared his eye for the picture of activity it would behold in the Outer Court. With every step he took, the noise and confusion grew. Wishing to study the crowd without himself being seen, he climbed on to the marble balustrade of the Outer

Court where it ran between two pillars and in the niche thus made concealed himself.

Directly across from where he stood was the table of Zador Ben Amon with two servants already in charge and a watcher to keep his eye on the chests and bags under the table. At this stand business had already begun. A Roman Jew had just left with his good Hebrew coin, and an Egyptian had come up, when a woman with two men stopped in front of the Galilean so that he could no longer see the money-changing going on. The woman wore the garb of a widow. One of the men was a scribe. The other man was a Pharisee. The face of the woman was much troubled and she plead with the scribe and the Pharisee. And when they would have left her she clung to them and passed on thus into the crowd. Very shortly after the three had passed the Galilean, he saw this same scribe at the money table across the way. He seemed to be buying a bag of coins, most likely mites for alms giving.

For half an hour the Galilean Rabbi watched the moving people from where he stood. Then he left the place and went into the Woman's Court. As there could be no traffic carried on here, there were few people and less noise, and he had not gone far when he heard some one weeping. He soon found it to be the widow he had seen a short time before. Without hesitation he approached her. "Why weepest thou?" he asked.

"The inheritance of my father hath been taken from me. The mother of six small men children I am and my husband hath died. And now no place of shelter have I."

"Who hath taken thy home?"

"The scribe took it not—so sayeth he. The Pharisee took it not—so sayeth he. But the two of them have taken my shelter to satisfy the Law—so say they."

"A scribe and a Pharisee. They are wolves in sheep's clothing!"

"Yea—but doth this get back for me my inheritance? Canst thou help me? My husband hath died and I am defrauded of all I possess."

"Silver and gold have I none—yet shall there be a reckoning!"

"My shelter is taken! My husband is dead and there is none to defend me!" and the woman turned her face again to the wall and wept bitterly.

The Galilean stood for a moment. Then he turned back and crossed the Outer Court coming into the porch. Here the sound of a trumpet attracted his attention. It was a Pharisee announcing his time of prayer. And when a crowd had gathered the Pharisee threw back his head and beat his breast until his frontlet dangled, and he thanked God he was not as other men. And lo, it was the one who had robbed the widow. The Galilean felt the flush of anger heat his cheek and he clenched

his fist as in childhood days he had done when some injustice demanded relief at his hands. With rising indignation he watched the Pharisee until a part of his long and carefully worded prayer had been told into the ear of the public.

As Jesus passed down the steps at no great distance he heard shouting and scuffling. Here he saw the scribe who had purchased coins from the table of Zador Ben Amon. A crowd of beggars had gathered and when the lawyer threw out the coins there was a great scramble and shoving and cursing. Those who picked up a coin shouted. Those who found none, fought. As a coin rolled toward the young Rabbi he picked it up and a look of surprise showed on his face as he examined it. Then again rose his anger and indignation, for the coin was spurious, as he soon found others to be.

Again he clenched his fist and the impulse came to strike, but he put it away and leaving the Temple turned his feet toward a narrow back street where the poverty-stricken swarmed. Here the pallid faces of the hungry, and the maimed bodies of many men told something of the suffering inflicted on these poor by the late wars. As he made his way through this district, the heart of Jesus was bowed under a great weight which was growing heavier and heavier as he acquainted himself with the mass suffering. Following a narrow street to a side gate he went beyond the city walls into a place of stony

valleys and gloomy ravines that made the quarries and pools of Jerusalem. In this place, fed by waters running through a subterranean passage from a fountain, was the Pool of Siloam. Gathered here on the broad stone steps that ran to the water's edge, was the outcast poor and the crippled. For a time the Galilean looked upon the scene of helplessness and pain with eyes of infinite compassion and pity, then turning his back on the basin of Siloam's misery, he lifted his eyes to Zion on the Mount and with a long deep sigh exclaimed: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"

Retracing his steps, Kedron came into view and again he paused. As he looked into the valley the stream ran brown. To-morrow it would carry clots of rosy foam under which the current would be dark and ruddy. Even as he looked upon it, the lambs were bleating in the stalls. The picture of the bloody sacrifice came before him—the awe-inspiring congregation of two hundred thousand of 'God's chosen ones.' At the ninth hour three blasts of the silver trumpet would start the surging chant of five thousand Levites and signal the beginning of the slaughter. And in the next six hours two hundred thousand lambs must be slain and carried away from the gate.

"What availeth all this?" he said to himself.

When Jesus reentered the Temple, several hours

had passed. The noise in the Outer Court had now grown to a deafening roar. Cattle were lowing and lambs bleating. Men shouted and cursed when an affrighted animal broke its tether. The voices of other men were heard calling their wares at shop entrances and booths, and the air was heavy with the stench of goats and cattle dung. Making his way through the crowd he found the niche between the pillars and again stepped into it to look for a few moments upon the scene of uproar and confusion. There was nothing to indicate a place of worship. Rather was it a great bazaar of shops with competition so keen at times as to give promise of the use of fists. In addition to the stalls of lambs and pigeons and the booths of oil and wine and wheat required for the sacrifices, there were stands for vase sellers, brass and copper dealers, dealers in ovens, dishes and bottles, silk merchants and jewelers and traffickers in imported goods.

The crowd was made up mostly of tradespeople and strangers with a sprinkling of Temple Guards and here and there scribes and Pharisees. The gleam of spear points of the Legion told that an extra guard had been sent in from the Tower of Antonio, and Jesus noticed that this guard was well established around the tables of the money-changers. His eye turned again to the table directly in front of him and now for the first time he saw its owner. He smiled at the memory of a startled face looking

at him in the dark from over a water-jar. But Zador Ben Amon did not look his way now. He was busy passing on the value of coins and in seeing that any who complained were well pushed out of the way by soldiers, to be swallowed up by the crowd. For a time Jesus watched the game. The last victim of the unscrupulous money-changer was a Galilean peasant, whose travel-stained and shabby body covering, bent shoulders and knotted hands bespoke poverty. When the change was pressed into his hand he refused to accept it. There were words. The peasant was ordered by Zador Ben Amon to move on. This he refused to do. Guards were summoned and when the man, who had been robbed of his one coin, still clamored for his money, he was cruelly beaten and dragged away to the stocks.

The Galilean watching from the balustrade felt again the fierce anger sweeping over him and he left his place of watching with his face turned in the direction of the money-changers. As he crossed the court he stopped at a goat pen. A dozen goats were just being brought in on the shoulders of as many men. As the animals were pushed into the pen the thongs that bound their legs were cast aside. Selecting a handful of these Jesus pressed on. When he reached the table of Zador Ben Amon, this mighty Sadducee was not in sight. But business was going on and, quite near at hand, the Galilean watched the money-changing while his quick fingers plaited

a scourge, and the muscles of his arm called him to action. He spoke no word and no man noticed the flush on his face nor the fire in his eye until the hiss of the thong sang over the heads of those about the table of Ben Amon and its stinging force fell across those who bent over the money bags. There was a yell, and another hissing of the thongs. Then the words rang out in a shout of mighty condemnation, "Ye have made my Father's house *a den of thieves!*" And the thong writhed and hissed and struck and stung and the coin-laden tables were overturned with the ease and fury of an enraged man brushing straw aside. Seeing the uproar about his table, Zador Ben Amon pushed his way through the confusion just in time to see two well filled money bags kicked open by a fellow money-changer trying to escape the scourge. With a shout and a curse he sprang forward. As he did so the hiss of the burning thongs sounded in his ears and the next instant he was blinded by the stinging pain of the scourge as blood ran across his cheeks and into his well oiled beard.

With incredible swiftness the money-changers had been driven out and the cleanser of the Temple had mounted the steps of the Beautiful Gate, and thong in hand was looking out on a scene unparalleled. Servants of money-changers were creeping about the floor; thieves were quickly at work stealing from those who had stolen, and the money-

changers themselves, Zador Ben Amon with bloody face among them, were struggling desperately to get possession of their bags before their contents should be wholly appropriated by itching fingers. Running in and out among the affrighted people were animals yet more affrighted whose bleating and bellowing mingled with the outcries of men, while over the heads of them all flocks of frightened doves with swift wing sought escape to the open.

There was a call for guards, but the man pausing on the steps for a passing moment only smiled as he saw them search for one who so boldly stood before them. But if the guards knew not where to look for him, there were those who saw, and in the commotion, when the question was asked, "Who did this thing?" the answer was, "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee who hath been acclaimed King of the Jews. He hath taken charge of the Temple! Let us see what cometh."

The first development from the confusion was the appearance of a number of scribes, Pharisees and Chief Priests who made their way in a body to the foot of the steps where he who had wrought the confusion stood. Fear, surprise and anger in varying degree marked the faces of these Temple officials. But their wrath was as nothing beside the righteous indignation of him who stood, thong in hand, awaiting their coming. They stopped at the foot of the steps—beyond reach of the weapon in

his hand. And from this safe distance they challenged his right and his authority.

A moment he regarded them in silent scorn, then he twisted the whip into a loose roll and flung it at their feet saying, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men! Woe unto you, hypocrites! Ye devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation! Woe unto ye, blind guides! Ye pay the tithe of mint and anise and cummin and omit the weightier matters of the Law,—judgment, mercy and faith. Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess! Woe, woe unto you! Ye are like whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward but within are full of dead men's bones! Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye build tombs for the prophets and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous while ye yourselves be children of them which *killed* the prophets! Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers! Ye serpents! How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Ye generation of vipers!"

A murmur was heard from the crowd which threatened to grow into a mighty demonstration, when, beginning on the outer edge, it died suddenly.

In its place was heard the measured tramp of feet and the clanking of arms. As if a magic wand had been extended over the people, the mass separated in the middle, forming an aisle through which came the High Priest's guard of Roman spearmen. Tongues stopped wagging. Something was going to happen. The tinkle of golden bells told that the High Priest himself approached, and every eye was turned to look upon him. Imperious in the splendor of his exalted office he made his way. His robe of blue and purple and scarlet, his gorgeous colored coat, his purple mitre and above all the sacred breast-plate sparkling with its twelve emblematic jewels as it hung in place on blue cords through gold rings, were in strong contrast to the plain and worn garment of the man who waited under the high arch of the Beautiful Gate with arms folded across his breast. An intense stillness fell over the gathering—such a hush as marked the circus arena in Rome when gladiatorial combatants came together in the death-struggle. As Annas, the All-Powerful head of God's elect priesthood, neared the end of the open path cut through the throng, the Galilean lifted his eyes from the surrounding scene and entered into some high place of communion. The flush of anger left his face. The calm of the Eternal took its place, and the High Priest with his Roman spearmen lined behind him stood without recognition for a moment. When the Galilean

turned his eyes on Annas he looked down as if from some vast height.

The lips of the High Priest moved, but something in the majestic mien and unfathomable eye of the one before him stopped the words half-formed. A second and third time his tongue raised itself to shape words, but the silent one before him gave unuttered command for silence. The conflict was on. Not a conflict of gleaming blades; not a conflict of cunning, neither of Senatorial oratory, nor contention of the wise gone mad. In the arena of the occult was the conflict on between such forces as move constellations and give birth to worlds. And the one force was white and the one was black. The one was the will of God leading by way of man's reason to Liberty and Life. The other was perversion leading by way of servile obedience to Bondage and Death. The one was Reality; the other but the Passing Show. So intense was the conflict of these unseen forces that it drew the multitude into its silent circle and held it spellbound. On the face of Annas alone was the progress of the fierce and deadly conflict written in terms of such hatred as made him appear almost inhuman. Yet the destructive force of the terrible vibration he sent out touched not the poise and calm of the Galilean, but after the law of like force it followed the arc of its own circle back into the breast that wore the twelve-jeweled breast-plate.

The nerve strain that seemed tearing the soul of

the High Priest was communicating itself to the congregation when the tense and awful stillness was broken by a shout. "Thou art the King!" a mighty voice called above the heads of the people. "Jesus of Nazareth, thou art the King!"

With an involuntary sigh of relief the people turned from the silent actors in the drama taking place under the Beautiful Gate, to learn who had spoken. A third time the shout rang out: "Thou art the King!" Now the people saw. It was a fisherman supported above the crowd on the shoulders of two Galileans. He shook a dingy red head-cloth as he shouted. The suppressed feeling of the crowd now gave way to a great murmur like that of a sea with a tide turning in, but before there was a demonstration a wild cry sounded through the court.

A soldier standing beneath the shouting fisherman had bent his body backward, as he gave command for silence, that he might the better face him who did the unlawful act. Casting his eye down as the soldier prodded him on the leg, the fisherman saw something that changed the shout on his lips to a curse. The next instant, as if it had been hurled from the heavens, the keen, two-edged blade of a fishing knife had lodged its point in the heart of the Roman. While the dying cries of the spearman yet moved the multitude to frenzied curiosity, Jael the fisherman, the High Priest and Jesus of Nazareth, each according to his own way, left the Temple.

CHAPTER XXIV

BY THIS WITNESS

AT THE Bethany home on the following afternoon Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus discussed the great drama that had taken place in the Temple and the danger coming out of it that would be added to the peril the Galilean was already in, because of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. While the men discussed the day's excitement, Martha told Mary of her visit to Jerusalem, as they sat in the garden on the edge of the stone basin, from which place Martha could watch the gate for the arrival of Eli from market.

"To-day while in Jerusalem," said Martha, "did Anna and Debora and I seek to make our way into the Temple, yet we got no farther than Solomon's Porch for here a thick crowd did stay our steps. As we pressed around one of the great pillars, we heard a voice. 'It is thy friend Rabbi Jesus,' said Anna. And by squeezing and struggling we pressed close until our eyes fell upon him in the midst of his disciples and a throng of strangers. When I did

cast my eye from him to the other side, it fell upon a beautiful woman wearing a dull mantle and a veil about her head. Beside her stood a massive slave with a scar on his cheek like the cut of a thrashing scythe. And the face of the woman and the face of the slave were set toward the Master. As she stood, a passer-by brushed her veil from her head, when, from under her dull cloak she did reach a hand as resplendent with jewels as the breast-plate of the High Priest. Then her arm appeared, and, lo, it was banded with gold and with chains of jewels, and also where the dull garment did part I saw the sheen of rare silk and fringes of silver and gold that glistened. Anna also saw and whispered 'Who is she?' Yet neither the woman nor the slave saw aught but Jesus. And as they listened to his words, tears gathered in the dark eyes of the great slave and like rivers of water crossing a deep gorge did pass the bold scar and drop over its edge. And as his tears fell Jesus turned to the scarred face, and Mary—what thinkest thou? It were as though I could read the look Jesus gave, which was writ in the light that did break over that scarred face, making it shine like the sun. And, too, his eye did find the woman of rich robes well concealed, and did rest on her face, and her face gave back an answer which was none other than that she loved him. It passed in a moment and the woman spoke to the scarred slave who wiped the tears from that

cruelly marked face, as slowly they turned away, the slave following the woman at a distance because of those who pushed between. And when the slave was passing the place where Jesus stood, the Master moved near him and spoke a few words which again did bring such a light as was a miracle on so ugly a countenance. While he paused, the woman looked back and seeing who spoke with her slave, waited. Then did Anna and Debora and thy sister Martha follow them to the portico."

"Thou hast forgotten something, Martha. Of importance, it is," Mary said.

"What is of importance?"

"The words of the Master. What said he that did hold together the crowd, that did bring tears to the scarred face of the slave and that did drive them away again with a glad light?"

"I know not. My eyes were too busy to give my ears a chance. At the portico a chariot and horses were waiting, such as the Romans drive. Mighty were their necks, and gorgeous were their trappings. Before the chariot the woman removed her dull coat and gave place to one like her jewels; and the scarred slave did show her great homage, as if she were a queen. When she was seated in the chariot he questioned her, and Mary—my sister Mary—who thinkest thou this gorgeous woman is?"

"Of the many gorgeous ones in Jerusalem, why asketh thou?"

"There is but one such in Jerusalem."

"Who is the woman?"

"The words she did speak, I will tell thee. Then wilt thou know. To the scarred slave she said, 'Drive thou to the Prætorium. Thy Lord Pilate awaits thy mistress Claudia.' "

"Thou hast seen Pilate's wife!" and Mary's voice was alive with interest.

"Yea, the wife of that vile heathen who sticketh spears into Israelites, as a bold child picks wings from flies—for no reason save to see them kick."

"And the wife of Pilate hath looked on the face of Jesus. Her ear hath heard the words of him who speaks as never man hath spoken."

"Yea, and she doth love him."

"Oh, that thou hadst heard his words, Martha."

"Rather that I might possess a chain of beads such as hung from her shoulder. But look thee down the roadway. There cometh Eli toiling up the path with no more speed than if he were not already two hours late."

When Martha and Mary entered the house, Eli, loaded with bundles, was coming in the door from the roadway.

"Thou art much loaded," Lazarus said, looking up.

"And thou art much late," Martha added.

"Behind a tomb black and stale have I tarried."

"Hast thou been near a tomb with thy meat?" Martha asked in alarm.

"I touched not the unclean thing though close was I driven. Yet did my tongue shake for fear of the plot."

"Plot?" quickly exclaimed Lazarus.

"What plot?" Joseph as quickly asked.

"The tombs throw not shadows while the sun yet hangs high. Methinks the man hath the plot in his own head," Martha said.

"The sun tarrieth not for the Passover rabble to finish its haggling over locusts and fish and oil. Ugh! The mob! And as I struggled for a place at the fish stand the sun passed over the mountain and left the valley grim. And lo, as I did travel, my fish and my sparrows slipped from me and to escape the hoofs and dust of a party of pilgrims I took my way behind an ancient tomb a long time used of sheep, to bind up my bundles. And no sooner had I sat me on the green than I heard a voice. Yet saw I no man. Again I heard the voice like a whisper. Then did fear lay hold of me lest the tomb be a den of ghosts and glad I was that the wall on the back was thick. Near this thick wall I put my back. Then the ghostly voice sounded nearer and I found my ear against a crack and I listened, for, though great my fear, my curiosity to hear the speech of ghosts overcame it. And when my ear lay close the voice was no longer that of a

ghost but of a man who hatched a plot which another who is not a ghost listened to."

"What is the plot?" Lazarus asked again.

"That I learned not though my ears did itch."

"A plot thou hast heard—a plot that hath made thine ears itch, yet neither dost thou know the plotter nor the plot. The ears of an ass are thine."

Eli gathered up his bundles. "If the plot shall come to pass then will thy eyes drop water-jars of tears and thy head know all are not fools who carry bundles," and he turned toward the court.

"Stay," said Lazarus. "Of a plot thou knowest, yet knowest not. Of a plotter thou knowest, but knowest not. What dost thou know?"

"Little—save him they whispered against. Him I know, and that the one who hatched the evil did come from the Temple."

"From the Temple!" It was Joseph who spoke and his words were an exclamation.

"Yea. And the evil one he whispered with is one who knoweth thy friend Jesus."

"Jesus!" exclaimed Lazarus and Mary in a breath. "Dost thou speak of *our* Jesus?"

"A plot against Jesus?" Lazarus asked. "Put thy goods down, thou fool, and tell what thou knowest."

"Already have I told that for which I was called a fool."

"What hast thou heard? Out with it!" and Lazarus helped Eli unload his bundles again.

With the party gathered closely about him Eli said, "There is naught to tell save that some one who hath been much about the Temple did make an offer of money for knowledge of the hiding-place of Jesus when he is not at Bethany. To do him harm was the purpose of the evil one, who did much thick-lipped whispering."

"What harm would this enemy of the Master do to him?" and Mary waited before Eli for an answer.

"Plotters plot death," he answered shortly, taking up his bundles.

"God of our fathers!" Mary cried. "What doth this mean? Lazarus, my brother Lazarus, Joseph, Father Joseph—let not harm come to him we love! Promise me—promise me!" and she held out her hands.

Taking her hands in his Joseph said, "Let not fear take possession of thy heart but rather thank thy God that thy servant did hide behind the tomb. Knowledge is better than swords. The young man hath life in his veins. He hath a great work to do. He courts not death. With knowledge aforetime of a plot, escape will be easy. But what is this plot? Who is this enemy? Is it of Rome, or the Great Sanhedrin?"

Lazarus, who had been walking the floor while Joseph spoke, stopped before Mary. "Yea, Mary," he said, "thank Jehovah that this hath been revealed

for while the source and manner of the plot doth not appear, yet there is safety in the warning. Soon will he be with us to hear the news. From the fox that hath oft crossed his path on Galilean hills hath he learned how to hide. From the hare that he hath seen running before the wolf hath he learned the wisdom of flight. Until the Passover is done must his whereabouts be kept dark. After this, a far journey."

Eli, with both hands full of packages, had gone as far as the door and stopped. He seemed waiting for something, and when Lazarus had finished he said, "That which an enemy of thy friend dropped, was picked up by the hand of Eli."

"What picked thou up? Money?" Lazarus asked.

"Nay—yet did I think that which he dropped and muttered curses over was money else would my feet have made wider space between the tomb and the place of his standing. An old and open tomb was it around which the smell of sheep hung heavy, and a bush of thorns grew at its corner and sent branches across the entrance. And when the enemy of thy friend would have held the branches down to walk over them, a thorn pierced his hand and he did curse. When he let go his hold of the branches, they did leap up and catch his garment. And again did he curse, saying he had suffered a loss. When he had gone and was well hid in the distance, then did Eli go by the thorn bush to find what had been

lost, and there on the sharp thorn stuck a bit of the garment of this cursing enemy. So I tore it loose to bring to Martha for I saw it had pleasant threads woven in it. And when I stooped to pick up my bundles at my feet, I found a treasure which I did bring Mary. Put thy hand in my wallet and take out that which doth shine but is not money."

With hurried fingers Mary opened the wallet while the others stood about looking eagerly on. When she had drawn out that which was not money, and before those standing by had seen what it was, she dropped it to the floor and sprang back, screaming.

"Hast thou been stung by an adder?" Lazarus cried.

"Yea—yea. There it is!" and she pointed to a shining gold circlet lying at the hem of Joseph's robe. Lazarus picked it up. A bit of blue border with a purple stripe and a red pomegranate, whose ragged edges showed that it had been torn from a garment, was twisted in one side of it. Every eye in the room was on the circlet when Lazarus placed it on the table, and they all gathered close around except Mary, who stood back watching the faces of Lazarus and Joseph. Martha took the bit of blue wool from the circlet, while Lazarus lifted up the gold itself, and the two looked at each other in speechless questioning. Then Lazarus turned to Mary.

"What is the mystery of this that our servant Eli hath found at the mouth of a sheep ridden tomb?"

"Mary seeth little of mystery but much of danger in that which thy hand holdeth," she answered.

"Thou gavest Zador Ben Amon back his betrothal anklet?"

"Yea, by putting it, unbeknown to him, in the border of his coat."

"Where it was tightly sewn the next day and hath remained in the dark until torn out by the sharp thorn, methinks," said Martha.

As Joseph, standing by, heard this brief conversation, his face took on a puzzled expression, seeing which Lazarus said, "Thou dost not understand. Here is that which seemeth to uncover to us the enemy of our friend Jesus. He is Zador Ben Amon, a Sadducee of power and a money-lender of great wealth. The man did have his heart set on Mary and did bring this anklet as a betrothal gift. But my sister loved him not, nor listened to his proposal for marriage and this gift she gave to him again."

"Yea, by putting it in the border of his cloak where methought he would find it on the morrow."

Joseph looked at the anklet. Then he raised his eyes to the face of Mary. "Thou didst not love the money-changer?"

"Nay! Nay!"

"Thy heart hath taken its way wisely. By this

witness," and he tapped the shining ring with his long forefinger, "he is," and the aged Rabbi bent his shoulders until his face was even with that of Mary, "he is a *murderer!*"

"Yea, yea—a murderer he is—*by this witness,*" Mary promptly answered.

"Is this Jew whose sensuous advances thou hast repulsed, acquainted with thy friendship for the Galilean?"

"I know not."

Joseph considered the matter a moment. When he spoke again it was to Lazarus. "There is a reason the money-changer is an enemy of our friend Jesus. It may be the woman. But in the money-changer's balances where gold doth weigh heavy, women weigh light. It is more likely this cometh of the swift and terrible scourging suffered by the money-changers at the hand of our brave friend. If so, a third source of danger ariseth. The wrath of Pilate is the wrath of Rome—a political danger—ever deadly. The wrath of the High Priest Annas is a religious wrath, cunning, and cruel as the grave. But the wrath of Zador Ben Amon is both these and more, for hath not the Master himself said, 'The love of money is the root of *all* evil'? Protected must our friend be against this threefold danger until he can escape, and God forbid that he fall into the hands of the enemy!"

"Yea—God forbid," Mary repeated with trembling voice. "Thinkest thou harm hath befallen

him so soon? See—the sun is sinking, yet he cometh not!" Choking back a sob Mary went into the court and to the place at the wall where she could watch down the roadway.

"Mary hath gone to watch for the Master," Martha said.

"She loveth him much," Joseph answered thoughtfully.

"Even so. Yet it is not seemly for a Jewish woman to let a man know she loveth him as doth Mary."

"Would that I knew," said Joseph without answering Martha's remark, "whether the voice in the tomb were the voice of the Great Sanhedrin. The spirit of murder brooded over the meeting I did attend to-day—murder in the name of Moses and the prophets."

"Murder thou sayest!" Lazarus exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yea—murder. Such is the spirit brooding over the priests."

The silence following this declaration was broken by a sharp cry coming from Mary in the garden. "Martha! Lazarus! Father Joseph!" and her voice was tense with excitement.

"What? What?" they cried, rushing to the door.

"The God of our fathers be praised!"

"Yea—yea—but for what?"

"He is safe! He is safe! The Master cometh!"

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE GARDEN

THE Passover moon was shedding its soft light over the garden of Lazarus, when Mary and Martha came from the house and sat down on the broad rim of the fountain basin. The day had been a busy one, and the day to follow was to be crowded yet fuller with work and pleasure for it was the day of the Great Feast.

"Anna's father doth give a feast to-morrow for his Passover guests, and for Jesus, who will be gone with the sunrise on the third day that he may escape danger. Joel hath been bidden with Lazarus, and Anna doth desire that we come to help her with the serving," Martha said as a beginning to her comment on the hospitality of Simon.

While they discussed the feast to be given by their neighbor, Lazarus joined them and said to Martha, "I am going to Simon's and Anna doth desire that thou come to plan with her for the feast to-morrow. Wilt thou also go, Mary?"

"Who goeth?"

"Joel goeth. Joseph hath gone to the roof and Jesus doth rest on the couch in the window."

"I go with thee," and Martha rose and turned to Mary, who said, "Nay, I go not. I will stay and gather lilies."

"Hast thou not yet learned the heart of man doth delight in meat and drink—not in lilies?"

"Thou forgettest the Master, my sister. The guest of honor will he be before his long going away, and thinkest thou he will not know whose hand plucked the lilies?"

"Mary hath the last word on thee, Martha," Lazarus said, laughing. "Let us be going," and they crossed the garden to the gate that opened into the court of Simon.

After they had gone, Mary went the length of the garden to her lily beds. While she was gathering the blossoms, Jesus came from the house and looked about him, and as he passed into the shade of the big olive tree, he discovered Mary. He stopped and watched her, as with her arms full of lilies she came toward the pool. In the silver light of the moon her soft white garments and silky veil lent spirit-like appearance to her slender body, and her face was beautiful with a rare beauty not born of flesh. When she reached the pool she knelt and placed the lily stems in the water. Rising, she hesitated a moment, then turned into the walk leading to the old stone wall where she often stood to watch

down the roadway for expected guests. For a few moments she leaned against the vine-grown stones gazing away into the moonlit distance. Then she dropped her head on her arms which lay folded across the top of the wall.

In a little while the stillness of the garden was broken by a voice which said, "Mary." She looked up with a start. Again she heard her name, "Mary."

Recognizing the voice she ran to the shade of the olive tree exclaiming, "Master! Master!"

She found Jesus sitting on the old stone bench and knelt beside him on a foot-stone. "Rest thou beside me," he said to her.

"Nay. Nay. At thy feet have the hours most precious to my heart been spent."

"Hath my teaching meant this to thee, Mary?"

"Yea. It hath meant all in life worth living for."

"Yet didst thou stand at the wall with bowed head."

"Yea. As the olive branches crossing the moon's light throw shadows over thy shoulders, so doth fear ofttimes coming across my faith, throw shadows on my heart. As I stood by the wall looking down the pathway thou dost often tread, the words of our servant Eli came to me, and fear for thy safety like a burden fell upon me. At other times the continual changing, maketh my heart sick

and my soul to long for that which changeth not. To-night thou, Jesus, and I, Mary, sit beneath the olive shade. Strong is thy step and in thy voice is mastery. Abundant is my hair and dark, and my body is supple and full of life. Yet will Time make of thy strength, weakness, and the frost of many winters will thin my hair and whiten it. In that day the keepers will tremble, the silver cord be loosened and the pitcher be broken at the fountain. Strange feet will tread the paths of Olivet and strange eyes look back on Jerusalem. Yet to-night we are here, thou, Jesus, and I, Mary. To-morrow —and then we shall be no more. Like feet ever fearful of the way and reaching for the solid rock, so the heart reaches for that which changeth not. Ever thou teachest 'God is love.' Doth love change?"

"Nay, Mary. Love remaineth the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. Yet the manner of its expression oft changeth. This knowest thou. The child that presseth its lips to her breast and fondleth her cheek, doth the mother love. So also doth she love the man that the child groweth into. And though he be hanged on the highest tree of Calvary, will she stand by and cover the hisses of the rabble with her sobs, for she doth love him though he is no longer at her breast. The lover doth love his love in life's springtime with wild passion. Then her form is round and her cheek fair and his strength is in the

making. When life's evening cometh—the flame hath given way to the soft glow. Then her shoulders stoop and her cheek is pale and his strength is in the garner, yet he doth not love the woman less, but differently. Love is the soul of the Universe and showing itself in *service* doth *fulfill all law.* My Father worketh hitherto, and I work also."

"Aye, my Master, I know thou lovest. In a tone akin to reverence hast thou oft spoken of thy love for thy mother. With great tenderness lovest thou little children, and thy fellow man—aye, have I not oft heard from thy lips that to do away with the kingdom of swords and hunger and want and bitterness—aye, to bring in the Kingdom of man's Brotherhood, thou wouldst be willing to lay down thy life? Strong and fearless, even tender is thy love as thou art a man. Yet because thou art a man, there is a love thou knowest not?"

"There is a love my heart doth not divine?"

"Yea, so my wisdom telleth me. Yet when I saw thee first a mother's love shone in thy face."

"And is there a love greater than a mother's love, Mary?"

"Yea, my Master. There is the love of which this mother-love is born."

"What manner of love is this?" and he leaned toward her as he waited for her answer.

"Before cometh mother-love, cometh woman's love for a man," she said after a brief hesitation.

"The mystery thou divinest. Thou art a woman. Tell me—what is the love of a woman for a man?"

"Thou dost ask me concerning the love in the heart of a woman that doth make it hunger for one man alone—apart from all the world, and in her dreams feel his arms about her, and beside a cradle look with him upon bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh? Dost thou ask me this?"

"I do ask thee, woman."

"And I do answer thee. A woman's love is a white flame on a deathless altar burning for the High Priest of her heart, where, over their united love the Shekinah doth hover as holy incense. And when the flame doth burn and the ear be ever listening for the priest in snowy raiment that cometh not, then doth the flame be ever consuming itself and the heart groweth sick, for woman's love desireth to give all."

"And doth thy ear listen for the footsteps of thy sacred altar's one High Priest?"

"Ask me not, my Master—ask me not. From my heart I have already lifted the veil too far aside for it is not given woman to speak of her love, though it is her life. Yet love is strange—love is holy!"

"Thou sayest well 'Love is strange—love is holy.' Love is the breath of God which corruption hath not power to touch. And as it hath been

ordered of the Creator that woman desire to give all, so hath it been given to man's love, to ask all—aye, Mary, *to take all.* So there are not two loves different. A man's love and a woman's love are but the two parts of that love which is both center and circumference of all that is. And among mankind it is the love that moves the woman and the man each to forsake all others and cleave one to the other. And thinkest thou I know not this love? Knowest thou not the fathers of Israel are a race of lovers? Did not our Father Jacob toil seven years for her whom his soul loved? It were not a female he would take unto himself, as a beast doth mate, else Leah would have served as well as Rachael. But for the love of Rachael did he toil yet other seven years. Nor did his body rest in the tomb until her bones lay beside him. And of the love of Boaz—were not Israel's kings begotten of this love? Aye, it was a lover of Israel that did sing 'Love is strong as death!' Of this race that has lived and loved and written of love and died loving come I. In my veins doth run the blood of a nation of lovers. Rise, Mary, and sit thou beside me. My heart hath that to say which my lips have not yet spoken."

When Mary had moved from the stone at his feet to a place beside him, Jesus said, "Sit thou close to me, aye, so close that not the shadow of a silver olive leaf can come between our souls—thy soul and

mine, for since mine eyes first beheld thee on the Temple porch thou hast been more to me than thou canst ever know. Weary have I oft come to thy home and thou hast rested me. Faint-hearted have I come, and thou hast strengthened me. Disappointed, and thou hast cheered me; discouraged with those dull of comprehension and thou hast understood, and while thou hast sat at my feet to learn, much have I learned of thee. Yea, thou hast been my friend, my counselor, my comrade, my disciple—all things thou hast been to me save one and without this, all other were but the hunger thy heart doth feel—were but the High Priest waiting where there were no altar fire. Mary, thou art my Rachael. Thou art my Ruth. Thou are my Rose of Sharon and my Lily of the Valley. As a rose among thorns, so to my heart art thou among the daughters of Zion. Thou art my soul's beloved! Woman—woman—I love thee! Lovest thou me with the love that is one with mine?"

"Lovest I thee? Aye, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Love I thee with all my soul, mind, strength and body. Yea, I love thee—not for a moon—not for a harvest—not for a jubilee of years —nay, not for the long centuries that make dust of our fathers' tombs. But until the Jordan forsaketh its course—until the moon droppeth forever behind Moab's hills—aye, beloved, until the mother forsaketh her son hanging on the highest tree, will I

love thee—and after that *forever!* For is not our God love? And is not God eternal?"

"Ah, Mary! Mary! The mystery of Love! Love is Life. He hath not known life who hath not felt the creative energy of the universe throbbing, breathing in his soul which love bringeth—aye, love of a woman. And yet—yet there be some, eunuchs which were so born: there be eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake." The last words were spoken by the young Rabbi as if to himself. He lifted his face to the moonlight for the moment and something like a sigh escaped his half closed lips. Then he turned again to the woman.

"Mary—beloved, there is a cup which each of us must drink. The cup that Life hath given me to drink hath ofttimes been filled with the bitterness of want, with loneliness and heart hunger. But knowledge of thy love doth overrun it with exceeding sweetness so that all suffering seems as naught. Blessed be the God that hath turned thy heart to me."

Again they sat silent in the shadows of the olive tree for a few moments. Then Mary spoke slowly and softly.

"To be here—just here alone with thee! Better than heaven it is to hear thy voice, to feel the pressure of thy hand and to know that the throbbing of

thy heart is for Mary. Thou makest my soul to dwell in groves of myrrh; to wander on mountains of frankincense and to feed in valleys of lilies. Though every drop of water in the fountain, though every silver leaf on Olivet were the tongue of a Levite shouting praise, this were faint singing beside the hosannahs of my heart because I am my beloved's and he is mine! This were enough—enough! Let the cup of Life be what it may! Henceforth thy cup be my cup."

"Knowest thou what thou sayest, woman? Doth thy heart know?"

"Yea, my heart knoweth. Where thou goest I will go. Thy lot shall be my lot. Thy dwelling shall be my dwelling whether cave or palace. Thy pillow shall be my pillow whether crimson wool or stone. Thy joy shall be my joy. Thy poverty shall be my poverty and my riches, thy riches. Thy danger shall be mine. Thy suffering shall be mine and whether come victory or defeat, this shall be ours together!"

"If victory cometh by way of that which men call 'death,' couldst thou see victory in this?"

"Speak not of death, my beloved," Mary said quickly, "when life hath just begun."

"Thou hast great faith, Mary, yea and great love. Yet do shadows sometimes fall across thy heart. So also doth fear cast over my heart shadows. Last night in the stillness, words I heard

spoken in Jerusalem did come to me until from the darkness that hung roundabout, a cross did seem to lift itself and afar I seemed to hear my own voice calling faintly for water."

"Nay, nay," and there was fear and the burden of a sob in Mary's voice. "Tell me not this evil thing! It doth make the shadow of the cross to fall upon my heart, dark and heavy."

"Be not burdened with it for from my heart all shadow fled with the coming of the new day. And to-night, this blessed night, do I feel life never held so much. Love maketh it doubly sweet."

"Thou art right. The cross were but a troubled dream. For malefactors and thieves and slaves of Rome is the cross. But not for a Prophet—a Rabbi —a Teacher—aye, a King."

"Not for a King sayest thou? Herein lieth my danger. Pilate's ear is never closed nor his lust for blood ever satisfied, neither his greed for the approval of Cæsar, and Pilate's crosses are ever ready for those who stir up the people. But weep not nor let thy heart be troubled. The uplifted cross of the dream I take as warning. Daily I teach in the Temple and none dare take me for my following. At night I abide without the city, where, none know save those who are my friends. When the Passover is done, I will go away for a season."

"Wilt thou be with us to-morrow? Ah, wilt

thou come again to me when the moon doth rise after to-morrow's busy day?"

"On the morrow we sit at meat with Simon. The Passover supper I eat with my disciples in the city, for so have I given my promise. If all go well I will return to thee when the moon cometh. If I am late, wait thou until the crowing of the cock, for where my treasure is, there is my heart also, and thither will my feet turn though the hour is late."

The crowing of a cock beyond the garden wall told the man and woman on the old stone bench that the hour was late. They arose and stood together just at the edge of the wavering shadows cast by the ancient tree.

"Alone on Olivet!" Jesus said in subdued voice. "How calm—how holy is the garden, and the new day that the crowing of the cock doth bring to us .....From the little town of Bethany lieth the road to the City of Zion, whither our feet tend. But between this calm and holy place and the towers of snow and gold that shine in glory from the City of God, lieth Kedron. Quiet with the hush of long silenced tongues, and dark with the shadow of tombs, lieth Kedron..... Mary, if it be that for a little time I should go on ahead of thee, even to the battlements of the New Jerusalem where the saved of Levi send their glad songs ringing over all earth's valley, will I watch for thee, my beloved. And if through the Valley of the Shadow thou

shouldst be called to go alone, remember that I am with thee."

"Remember will I? Yea, ever will I remember that there is not in the universe that which can destroy love. But thou wilt come again on the morrow night. I feel it in my heart, and may the Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent one from the other."

"It shall be even so for what God hath joined together none can put asunder. The peace of God that passeth understanding and His Everlasting Arms of Strength, tender as those about a bride, protect thee. Farewell, my Mary. Woman, fare thee well."

"Farewell, my soul's beloved. Until the morrow, fare thee well."

CHAPTER XXVI

CLAUDIA AND PILATE

WHILE Mary the Jewess was sitting with the Galilean Rabbi in the moonlit garden at Bethany, Claudia Procula, the Roman noblewoman, was spending her last evening before the Passover in her gorgeously appointed apartment in the palace of Herod the Great. On one side of this pillared chamber, high-hung heavy curtains drawn apart, disclosed a sleeping apartment with a bed and couches. At the foot of the bed a swinging window opened out above the street and through its mullioned outlines the fading pink of a springtime sunset could be seen. Claudia's two Greek slaves, Zenobe and Margara, were lounging on the couches discussing a new robe that had been brought from Rome, when their mistress, followed by her eunuch, entered the apartment.

"Light thou the lamps," Claudia commanded as, without unfastening her outer wrap, she sat down and watched the big slave. When he had applied fire to the oil held high in silver basins set on pol-

ished cedar standards, he turned to his mistress. For a moment she did not heed him. Then she said, "Say to the servants, Pilate cometh soon. When thou hast done so, return to me drawing the curtains at thy back when thou hast entered."

When the eunuch returned to the room he took his place against the curtained hanging, and stood like a statue until his mistress said, without looking toward him, "Stand thou before me."

"What is thy command, most noble mistress?" he asked as he stepped before her and with squared shoulders and crossed arms waited her command.

She did not answer for a few moments. When she spoke it was an inquiry. "The Jew of the Temple—his face do I see whether I look in the circle where the light falls or in the corners where the shadows gather—his face. With such eyes doth he look into my eyes as it seemeth have been searching me out since the beginning of time. And those eyes are imploring me for something—pleading as if for some withheld treasure."

"Yea, most noble mistress."

"'Yea' thou dost say. Dost thou know the request of the Jew's eyes?"

"Yea, most noble mistress."

"What sayeth those eyes to Claudia?"

"This sayeth those eyes to the heart of Claudia, 'Give me thy heart.'"

"My heart!" Claudia exclaimed.

"Yea, most noble mistress. This is the treasure the Galilean doth implore of thee."

Claudia arose. She stood in silent thought a moment. Then she turned her eyes to the face of the eunuch and after studying it said, "Thy scarred face did glow this day with a light that seemed not earthly. My slave hath had words with the Jew. Is it forbidden to tell them to a Roman woman?"

"With the Galilean there is neither Roman nor Jew. Neither is it forbidden to spread abroad his teachings. The words he did say to thy scarred slave were these: 'Blessed be the eyes which see the things that ye see; for many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.' "

With her eyes on the face of the slave, Claudia pondered the words he had spoken before saying, "And he hath said thy eyes be blessed because thou seest something hidden. I would understand. Is this forbidden?"

"Nay. Yet there is an understanding of the heart which is unutterable. To another heart no words can make it known. Of this did he speak to thy slave. There is that, however, coming ever from the power unspeakable, that hath a name. This word wouldst thou hear?"

"Yea, yea, my eunuch. Speak it."

"It is *freedom.*"

"Freedom? What sayest thou, slave of Claudia? What meanest thou? Art thou not the property of thy mistress?"

"There is freedom, and again there is other freedom. Thou dost own the hands, the toil, the obedience of this body that Rome hath mutilated and burned. But there is a man in me that the hand of Rome toucheth not. As this man thinketh in his heart, so is he. If in my heart I am a slave, then am I a slave though my body be free. But if in my heart I am free, then I am free though an implement of Rome. Aye, most noble mistress, the Jew hath given me freedom."

"Freedom! How the heart doth hunger for freedom—freedom from one's self." And she crossed the room and recrossing stopped again before the slave. "My scarred eunuch," she said.

"I listen, my mistress."

"It is not beneath the dignity of Claudia Procula to glean gems when she findeth them shining in her path. Out of thy mouth have come words of wisdom which bear not scars as doth thy body. Such have been treasured. Ah, as the tide is greater than the storm, as the sun is greater than the wind, as the mind of man is greater than the sword, so shall there come a Kingdom before which that of Cæsar's sword shall perish forever. What sayest thou? Is the Kingdom the Jew doth teach of, this Kingdom?"

"So it hath been revealed to the heart of thy slave."

"A year hath passed since last thou wert in Jerusalem. In the arena at Rome hath been the clash of steel, and fangs, and the wild and soul-piercing music of screams and dying curses. Beyond Rome hath Rome held the nations of the earth under the sword-blade that her lords be drunk and her rich fed on the life-blood of the poor. Again we are at Jerusalem to the Passover Feast of the Jews. And again in their Temple find we one who teacheth against all this. My scarred eunuch, lovest thou this Jew?"

"Aye, most gracious mistress, even to the laying down of my life."

"He hath disciples."

"Yea—blessed be they."

"Wouldst thou be his disciple?"

"Such I am."

"Yea, in thy heart. But wouldst thou be free to go abroad and of thy wisdom teach the wisdom of the Jew; spread news of that greater Kingdom which cometh not of the sword and wherein all men shall be free?"

"Most noble mistress, tempt me not to hate my bondage more by bringing to my ears such words."

"To-night are the Jews celebrating the birthday of their nation with a great feast. To-night shalt

thou also have a birthday for hereby give I thee thy freedom. When the sun doth rise on the morrow, go thou and sit at the feet of the Jew and hearing glad tidings, bear them to others."

For a moment the slave stood as if dazed before his breath shaped the words "Freedom? Freedom?" and his lips trembled as he said, "Do my ears hear? Dost thou say 'Freedom' for thy scarred eunuch?"

"Yea, doubly free shalt thou go—free by the word of the Jew and free by the hand of the Roman, and would that I too might be as free as thou art!" Then the slave fell on his knees before Claudia, bowed his head to her jeweled shoe and sobbed. There were tears in the eyes of Pilate's wife as she said, "Arise—thou art no longer a slave."

Lifting his face, which appeared strangely noble, he said, "My mistress—my most gracious mistress, thy feet are on the threshold of the Kingdom."

"Arise—arise. Go to thy bed. This night thou art free. To-morrow thou shalt go from me. As thou goest, forget not that the heart of Claudia doth beat with sympathy for the oppressed and that she too hath love for him whose love thou shalt spread abroad. Arise!"

The eunuch arose and extended his arms so that his mighty body stood before her like a cross of flesh. Before it she bowed her head.

"The blessing of the Jew who is called Jesus fill thy heart, most gracious Claudia, and the peace

that cometh of his teaching rest thy soul. Farewell!" He again kissed the border of her cloak, hesitated, and turning abruptly, left the apartment.

When the curtain had swung into place shutting the slave from view, Claudia sat down and called her maids. "Unclasp my jewels and unbind my hair, Margara," she said wearily, throwing her cloak aside. "And thou, Zenobe, summon Pilate's servant with the wine. Thy master tarrieth, and delay improveth not the temper of a man when he would have his cups."

The servant had placed a tray of wine beside the couch of Pilate and the maids had gone out with the cloak and jewels when the approach of the Procurator was announced by a shout, the tramping of feet and clanking of arms. The door was thrown open wide and between two rows of soldiery standing stiff and shining as the spears in their hands, the Roman in royal purple and glittering winged helmet, entered.

"Greetings, Claudia! Dry am I as the Law of the Jews. Hath my wine been made ready?"

"Thy wine is ready."

He threw himself down on the couch saying, "And over it shall I return thanks, as do the Jews, that to-night doth end their uproar. No more for a year will they feed on lamb, roast whole with bitter sauce. For the impudence of the Jew would I

fill his Temple with the gods of Rome and make of his holy place a dancing spot for virgins that be neither virgins nor veiled. The dogs!"

"Hath thy memory become shortened that thou dost not see back a space of months? Didst thou not try moving Cæsarea to Jerusalem and putting thine image in the Temple? And did not these same dogs spread their necks at thy feet and court the sword rather than have their Temple desecrated? Yet more blood would have flown than that of the six thousand thou slew hadst thou not been made to remember that Pilate is not Cæsar. It is not right, my Lord, to do evil, nay not to the neck of a dog."

"Whether the hand is that of Pilate or of Cæsar, the sword of Rome determines what is right."

"Not so, my Lord Pilate. Might is not right unless it be *right*. In the jungle where hunters for the arena seek wild beasts, pythons and wolves and hyenas growl and scream, and the strong doth ever lick from his jaws the blood of the weak. To Rome all the earth is a jungle where Rome is the king lion, the fierce he-tiger, the unsatisfied she-wolf. And from the jaws of this Beast, the blood of nations drips and the groans of mangled slaves fall ever on the ear. Ever in my heart have I felt this is not right. Now hath arisen among the Jews, whose blood thou delightest to spill, one whose teaching I have felt before I ever heard of him.

This one delighteth not in gleaming steel, nor screams of agony, nor running blood."

"Ho! Claudia! Where is the Jew whose heart taketh not delight in flashing steel, dying screams and running blood? Thinkest thou there be such? Then should thou feast thine eyes on the Passover sacrifice. Here are ten thousand priests with whetted blades which they do plunge in bleating throats until two hundred thousand lambs are slaughtered before the eyes of their great god Jehovah. Beside such slaughter as this that of the arena is but child's play."

"I mark thy words. The Jew is bloody and hath a bloody god. Yet from among them ariseth one who doth preach a new Kingdom and a god that delighteth not in the shedding of blood."

"Where getteth thou thy knowledge?"

"From the eunuch thou gavest me, my Lord Pilate."

"Ho! ho!" and Pilate threw up his hands and shouted with laughter. "From a slave the wife of Pontius Pilate doth get learning? Ho! ho! Claudia wouldst be a disciple of a eunuch whose back bears marks of the scourge, whose arm is branded with deep burning and whose face beareth the scar of a Roman blade? Or wouldst thou be a Jew, my fair Claudia?" and he drained three cups of wine between times of laughter.

Claudia stepped before Pilate and threw her hands across her breast—"Nay—not a Jew would I be!" she exclaimed. "A woman of the Proculas I am. But under the royal robe that hideth the breast of Pilate's wife there is a heart, a heart, most mighty Pilate, that turns against blood and the quivering of flesh and the soul-sickening agony of death! A heart, my Lord, that cries out against this and doth ever hope for a power that doth not hate and torture. A Kingdom there shall be without the sword of Rome or the lamb's blood of Jerusalem; a Kingdom without the arena of Rome or the Temple sacrifices. And in this Kingdom shall man render unto man as he himself would be rendered unto. Of this Kingdom doth he teach who hath arisen from among the Jews."

Pilate poured another cup. "The lips of Pilate's wife do babble like a babe," he said. "Knowest thou not, my fair Claudia, that the coming of such a kingdom would mean naught save the passing of Rome?"

Claudia rested her hand on the arm of Pilate until he looked up at her. She said slowly, "And knowest thou not, my brave Pilate, that Rome is *already passing?* Aye, even the more that Rome doth enslave men, the more she doth bring to herself the weakness which death shall overtake, for no more do Roman women bear the sort of sons valor cometh of."

"Ho! ho! What thou shouldst say is that Cæsar's wife is no more above suspicion."

"Of a surety, my Lord, since *Rome hath no more Cæsars.* On that day when the populace stood weeping where flames from the funeral pyre did cast their somber smoke against Castor and Pollux, perished Cæsar."

"Rome hath ever its Cæsar."

"Yea, of some sort. Augustus were not Cæsar. Tiberius is not Cæsar, neither is he Augustus. Who doth follow Tiberius? And then what next?"

"What next? Aye, Claudia, my fair one—a cup of wine next. And after that shall Rome make Senators of her women and thou shalt be Brutus, for, by the gods, thou makest a ripe speech. Here's to thee, Claudia, my love. A Roman thou art though much taken with the twaddle of a Jew. And here is to the Jew. May he live long to oil his beard, haggle over fish in the market place, cry 'Unclean' at sight of a Gentile and pray in musty synagogues for the kingdom greater than that of Rome. Let us now to bed and see thou hast no dreams to disturb thy rest," and throwing down his cup, Pilate arose.

"Dreams are signs, my Pilate."

"Dream then of the prosperity of Pilate." As he paused under the drawn curtains, Pilate stopped

to command his guard, "Waken me not until the sun doth clear the Temple tower. Draw the curtains tight and let no man pass them."

When he had entered the bedchamber the curtains were lowered and the guards stationed themselves at the door. A moment later, Claudia paused as she pushed the curtain aside, saying to the guards, "Forget not thy Lord Pilate's command. Wake him not."

CHAPTER XXVII

CÆSAR'S FRIEND

AFTER Pilate and Claudia had retired behind the curtains, the guards took their places for the night. Inside the door to the left and right a picked man of Pilate's body-guard stationed himself. An enormous spear, which lifted its shining point like an ensign over his head, was held by each soldier and shifted from hand to hand as these motionless and silent men grew drowsy. In the outer hall soldiers of the Legion stood on guard from the entrance into the inner room, down the long corridor to the portico steps. In spite of orders that no word be spoken in the hallway after Pilate had retired, these soldiers, knowing his manner of sleep, made use of the night hours to discuss such daytime gossip as had reached their ears. The comment began when news was passed that Pilate had gone to sleep, and between the left guard and the right guard a conversation took place which would have been interesting to the public.

"Had I as much ripe wine in my paunch as hath the gracious Pilate, I would also sleep."

"Aye. But by the shades of Cæsar did not his sleep of yesternight outmatch even the measure of his cups? Drank and drank did our master Pilate until his eyes bulged and his tongue was pushed out of his throat by the fulness thereof. And he did sleep and sleep until the sun had started down next day."

"And were there not soldiers and priests and lawyers and centurions and Senators clamoring to have speech with him? And did not Claudia pass out the word that he was engaged in matters of importance to Tiberius?"

"Thou makest my inwards to shake with choked laughter when thou sayest this—'business of importance to Tiberius.'"

"Yea—and wherefore the smothered laughter. Is not the important business of Cæsar Tiberius the putting away of much wine, even as is the business of Pilate?"

"Yea. But Tiberius doth have a deputy to satisfy the demands for him."

"And some are as insistent as itch."

"Yea, like the broad Jew whose foot caught in the blue and purple cloak he let drag in his desire to be heard."

"His business was urgent by the glittering eagerness of his two small eyes."

"Yea, and the gold he held forth did glitter better than his Jew eyes as he said, 'My mission is

urgent! One hath arisen against the Empire yet doth Pontius Pilate not come forth nor give audience to message bearers.' "

" 'He seeth neither god nor man until his business of importance to Tiberius is finished, since first of all he is Cæsar's friend,' did I make answer, straight-faced and solemn, for who would feel the fire of the branding iron for a bit of gold? Then it was his countenance became entangled in anger as his foot became entangled in his blue cloak, and he did breathe out a curse."

"The curse of a Jew is no curse since it must be swallowed if it is against Rome. But look thee toward the steps. On my life a messenger cometh."

While the two soldiers of the Legion were gossiping on the outside of the door the two guards on the inside were leaning heavily on their spears.

"My eyes—but sleep pricketh me," the first guard said.

"Sleep then," the second replied. "But no dreaming."

"Nay—no dreaming."

"Listen! Pilate is gone until the new day."

On the stillness the sound of heavy snoring was heard. The guards leaned against the wall, spears in hand, and were soon asleep. A trumpet from the street below sounded the hours of night. The snores of Pilate were answered by the snoring of the two guards and the palace seemed given to

slumber, when the tramp of feet and knocking of standards was heard outside.

"Methinks I dream," the first guard said drowsily. "Yea, I dream there is a great commotion."

"It is the troops rushing to war!" the second guard answered sleepily.

"Troops rushing to war." The words were feebly uttered.

The knocking continued at the door, growing quicker and harder.

"Who knocks?" the guard shouted.

"Open thou the door," was shouted back.

"Who cometh?"

"A message from the Tower of Antonio. We would see Pilate," the voice outside answered.

The door was opened and the messenger with a number of soldiers entered. "A message for the Procurator, Pontius Pilate."

"My Lord Pilate is in bed with orders not to awaken him."

"Whether thou awaken him or no, make thy choice. Here is the message and I await a reply."

"Take thou it," the first guard said to the second one. "Take thou the message to his bed."

"Risk thou thine own life," was the prompt reply.

"Enter and awaken him," the first guard said to the messenger.

"Time is passing," he replied with dignity. "I await a reply."

"Let us all waken him!" the second guard suggested.

So they advanced to the curtains that hung over Pilate's door and shouted together as they beat the floor, "Awake! Arise, my Lord Pilate!"

"Is the house falling?" The voice was that of Pilate. A moment later he stuck his head from between the curtains shouting, "To the fires of Pluto with you! What meaneth this disturbance?"

"A message for my Lord Pilate," the messenger replied, handing him a tablet. "From the Tower of Antonio, a message."

Claudia stepped behind Pilate and looked over his shoulder. "What is it?" she asked.

"The hiding-place of a Jew who hath not regard for the Law of Moses has been discovered. This is a request for soldiers to go out against him."

"A Jew? Who is he?" and Claudia's voice bespoke deep interest.

"What matter?" Pilate replied, yawning. "A Jew is a Jew. Let them go out against him. My tablets!" he shouted to a servant. After hastily writing, he gave the messenger a tablet saying, "Depart! One Jew is not worth the asking, but take him." Before the feet of the messenger had crossed the threshold Pilate was ready to return to his sleep. "Get thou on guard," he commanded his

Legion soldiers, and let none less than Cæsar pass my threshold."

For a few hours the long corridors and empty chambers of the palace were quiet. Then again there came the sound of approaching feet, followed by knocking and a heavy voice calling the Procurator.

"Pilate again!" murmured one of the guards sleepily. Then speaking to the other he cried, "Why sleepest thou on duty? Get thee awake!"

Hardly had they assumed their positions inside the door when it was thrown open and an officer followed by soldiers, entered. "Let not an instant pass!" he commanded. "Call the Procurator, Pontius Pilate."

Following his command, the voice of Claudia behind the curtains was heard saying, "Pilate—my Lord Pilate—awake! It is an officer of the Legion. Arise!"

A moment later the head of Pilate was again thrust between the curtains as he shouted, "The wrath of Jove! What meaneth this?"

"In the Judgment Hall thou art wanted. Thy soldiers have taken captive one charged with sedition. At a midnight meeting of the Sanhedrin hath he been found guilty."

"And what care I, Pontius Pilate, whether he be guilty or no? On the Law of Moses would I myself spit. Yet by their own Law can not the

swine-fearing dogs condemn a man before morning. By their own law will I condemn them and take their Temple. Go thou to those long-faced circumcized and say in their ears that for causing this unlawful disturbance ere the morning watch, I will make them suffer."

"Aye," replied the officer. "But my most gracious Pilate, conspiracy is also charged against the Jew for it is he who was acclaimed King of the Jews while all Jerusalem did shout his praises. A great following hath he of Galileans, Zealots and Judean warriors. Revolution against the throne of Cæsar is all but born."

"Thou sayest this is he that was acclaimed King of the Jews?" and Pilate's eye shone with a new glow.

"The same. He is a conspirator."

"And they have taken *him?* Then have they favored Pilate who hath not yet discovered the nightly hiding-place of this conspirator."

"Nay! Nay! He is no conspirator, my Lord Pilate," cried Claudia, hurrying from behind the curtains as she wrapped her shoulders in a veil. "He is no conspirator! Naught save a teacher of Truth is he."

"Thou sayest he hath been taken?" Pilate asked of the officer.

"Yea, by the soldiers which thou didst despatch before midnight with the guard of the Temple. He

was betrayed by one of his followers, and his hiding-place discovered. Already hath he been before Annas who did send him to Caiaphas. Now waiteth he at the Judgment Hall around which a crowd is gathered, and they say thou art not Cæsar's friend unless thou cometh."

"They say I am not Cæsar's friend?" he exclaimed in excitement. "Hasten thou to the Judgment Hall and say thou to the right and to the left, as a trumpeteer doth lead thee, 'Pilate is already on the way!' " When the officer had made a hurried exit, Pilate in great haste shouted: "Up, laggards! Move! My coat! Quick with the royal ensign and the eagle! Pilate is a friend of Cæsar and this conspirator for the throne of our Tiberius shall be stretched on a cross ere the new-day sun reach the mountain top."

"Calm thyself, my Lord Pilate," Claudia said. "Nor let the words of the rabble spoil thy reason. No conspirator is this Jew. He is a teacher of the Truth. Quell thou this uproar and come thou back to bed. Hearest thou my words?"

"Nay. No words I hear save the words 'He is not Cæsar's friend.' Cæsar's friend would I be though all the Jews in Palestine are hung on wooden crosses. Farewell, Claudia. Thou art the wife of Cæsar's friend."

Pilate turned to go, but Claudia lay hold of him saying, "Nay, my Lord Pilate, thou shalt not

go until my words thou hearest. Forever will Rome bear the brand of shame should it stretch on a wooden cross one who teacheth such wisdom as doth this Jew. Thou shalt not go until a promise is made me."

"What promise?" he asked hurriedly.

"If he come before thy judgment seat, judge him of the words of his own mouth and by the words of his own mouth free or condemn him."

"I promise, Claudia—I promise."

"Thou understandest that out of the mouth of the Jew thou wilt free or condemn him?"

"Yea—yea! Let me go! I am a friend of Cæsar!" and he loosed himself and hurried down the long corridor.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ROSES AND IRIS AND TEARS

IN FULL vestments of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea stood beside the moonlit pool in the garden of Lazarus. The hand-washing and hymn-singing and feasting on roast lamb in bitter sauce, was over for another twelvemonth. With a glance prophetic, Joseph looked into this new year and shook his head saying slowly, "The signs are full of portent. Darkness doth seem to gather over Israel."

"Thy heart hath a burden?" Lazarus asked, coming from the house.

The patriarch lifted his face to the young man. For a moment there was no answer. The voice of Joseph was grave when he said, "Yea, more than a burden doth lie on my heart. Fear hath clutched it and while my lips made merry at the feast I did suffer, knowing the young man's life is in danger—aye, the life of Jesus. Doth not thy heart feel it? And the heart of thy sister Mary, doth not her heart suffer the torture of fear?"

"Perchance it is weariness that Mary suffereth. The feast maketh much labor."

"As we did sing the Pascal hymn, lo, did the lips of Mary shape a prayer. Twice did tears, which she did try to hide, drop from her cheek, and thrice did she choke in the throat. Is this weariness?"

"She was disappointed. The heart of Mary did want the Master by her side, but it had seemed good to him to eat the Passover with his disciples in the city."

"Disappointment? Would to God it were no more. But, Lazarus, when the alabaster vase of thy sister was broken, then was her heart broken also and as the rich perfume was spilled, so was hope spilled from her heart because of the saying of the Master that she had anointed him for burial. Aye, Lazarus, the signs are full of portent."

"Where is thy sister Mary?" Lazarus asked of Martha who had joined them by the pool.

"She is in the house bending over the Scriptures. Yet her heart doth not go out to the songs of David. A burden she would hide."

"Knoweth she aught of Jesus?" Joseph asked.

"I know not. Until the cock crew she was in the garden with him yester evening. And in the night as she lay beside me in her bed, methought I heard a moan that traveled not far from the heart where it was born. Mary lay awake and I did question her. 'It is but the tamarask leaves against the

casement,' she said. Again I heard a sob quickly smothered. When I did speak, and bid Mary listen, she declared it naught but the night wind lifting the pomegranate branches. When morning cometh, from her carved chest she took her alabaster box of very precious ointment which she did cherish to make sweet her wedding veil. Her face was glad as if she had been a bride and joyous her words as she said, 'Lo, the darkness is gone! In the night, fear of shadows and losses trouble me, but with the morning cometh light. Look thou! Was ever a sun so golden? I go to Simon's to the feast. One there is among the guests who is a King. Yea, Martha, by the words of his own mouth he is my King—*mine,* my sister. Thus, after the manner of the feast, the guest of honor I will anoint with my oil of roses and iris, because so soon he goeth on a long journey.' "

"Ever will my heart be glad to think on the joy of her face," Lazarus said, "as she did break the seal and scatter the first drops of her perfume on his hair."

"Did ever such fragrance make thy breathing glad?" Martha asked with smiling face. "Like the balm of Gilead, like forests of frankincense, it filled the room. Was it not even so, Father Joseph?"

"Great was the fragrance and precious the joy on thy sister's face. But straightway my pleasure was turned away by the words of Judas."

"Yea, great concern doth he show for the poor!" And there was indignation in the voice of Lazarus. "'Here is great waste,' said he. 'Are not two hundred dinars sufficient to buy bread for a thousand?'"

"And, Lazarus," Joseph said, "with the words of Judas did the first shadow fall across thy sister's face. Faint it was, yet not too faint for his eye who loveth her. And he said, 'Why trouble you the woman? She hath wrought a good work. The poor ye have always with you. But me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she doeth it for my burial.' Aye, Lazarus, aye, Martha, that I might forget thy sister's face as these words did pass his lips. It turned white as the alabaster in her hand. Stillness fell on the company about the table like that of the tomb. And then the sob! Lazarus, that sob did wound my heart. Then did thy sister drop at the feet of Jesus and there spill out her fragrant oil. And on the oil her tears fell, even like rain fell they, and bending low her cheek did press his foot. And then she dried away the tears with the tresses of her hair—sobbing—sobbing—sobbing! Sobs are a part of life, the sobs of women and children. But this woman—aye, greater love hath never woman known than this which Mary beareth the brave young Rabbi."

"And hath man e'er given back to woman greater love than he beareth her? Saw thou his

face as she did sob at his feet? Did thou catch the message he did speak to comfort the heart of Mary? In a voice that did mean more than words, both to the woman and him who had condemned her spoke he saying, 'Truly, truly say I unto you, wheresoever this message that I bring shall be preached, there also what this woman hath done shall be told for a memorial of her.' Joseph—friend Joseph, meaneth it not much to her heart, meaneth it not much to this household, that wherever the name of Jesus shall be spoken there also shall be known the name of Mary?"

"And if he is King," Martha exclaimed, "King of the Jews, then shall her name be exalted above that of all women."

"And if he is condemned on some false charge and given to the cross, Martha? But no, that can never be," and Lazarus ceased speaking abruptly.

"Neither can a throne give nor a cross take away a woman's crown when he who is her king doth crown her with his love. So it is that the alabaster vase which hath poured out fragrance from its fragments, shall shed its perfume down the ages so long as love is of life a part." It was Joseph who spoke.

"Lazarus doth utter strange, yea, evil words about a cross and a malefactor. What meaneth it?" Martha asked him.

"Knowest thou not, woman, how the plot doth

thicken that would make way with Jesus? Passed is that day when the Sanhedrin did sneer and condemn and mutter and hatch plans. Now doth it openly seek his death."

"Yet," said Lazarus, "he hath been threatened before and hath escaped, even though they took up stones against him. Plans have we made for a long journey, yea, even to Rome will he journey and under the throne of Cæsar will he preach the Kingdom greater than that of Tiberius."

Joseph stroked his beard slowly. "There doth come a time," and his voice was low, "when fire, long smoldering, doth burst into a devouring flame. Was I not in the Sanhedrin? Did I not hear? Such fire, to the eternal undoing of Israel, doth burn in the hearts of the Sanhedrin."

"They dare not take him by day," Lazarus protested, "and by night he abideth not in Jerusalem and none knoweth his dwelling place save those his heart trusts."

"In hiding and flight lieth now his safety. Would that I might know he is secure this night."

"Mary hath said he will return to-night to Bethany," Martha told Joseph.

He raised his face to the sky saying, "The moon doth climb the heavens."

"Yet ofttimes do guests tarry over the Pascal cup until the hour grow late. Methinks he will yet come, Joseph," said Lazarus.

"So hopeth my heart. But from the silence I get no answer to my question, 'Will Israel cast off her Lord's anointed?' "

"Nay, nay. All will be well. But let us to rest, the hour is growing late," and Lazarus turned to the house.

"And Mary?" The question was asked by Joseph.

"Mary doth yet sit with her writings," Martha answered, looking in the door, "though her ear is to the roadway. When I shall enter and say, 'Mary, wilt thou go to rest?' she will answer, 'Shortly.' And lo, when I have gone, she will come into the garden and from her place at the wall watch down the hillside."

CHAPTER XXIX

SWIFT MESSENGERS

AS MARTHA had expected, Mary refused to go to rest and when all about was quiet she went into the garden. For a moment she paused before the stone bench, then with lingering step she sought the fountain. Under the light of the moon the garden seemed to lie in a silver aura. Where the lilies grew thick and white the aura seemed to be a cloud-like halo lying close to earth and on the pool the light was caught in tiny shining bars.

"How still the garden!" Mary said, speaking to herself. "Scarce breathing is the summer night—waiting it doth seem for something to give it life. The leaves wait—wait for the evening breeze to touch them into motion. The valley waiteth—waiteth for the song of the pilgrim to break its hush with gladness. So waiteth my soul for sight of a face that shall drive back the shadows of fear. So waiteth my heart for the sound of a voice that shall stir the silence of the waiting into wild glad music. Will he come? Or will—but no, no—it can not,

can not be that he will come no more. The God that fashioned me of dust formed likewise the mystery of life, my love for him and his for me.... And lo, then did the hand of Jehovah make the feet of him I love to enter in upon the path my feet do tread. So hath my soul been bound to his soul and there are no more two souls, but one soul. And having wrought thus blessedly, will God play with the love he hath put in a woman's heart and bring to her soul such agony as doth wring drops of blood from her? Nay, nay! It can not be! He must come! He will come! Hasten, my beloved; I am waiting!"

Mary walked around the circular pool slowly. As she did so, the crowing of a cock, its sharpness muffled by some distance, sounded on the stillness. "The cock croweth the midnight hour," she said as the last faint vibration died. "Until the crowing of the cock did he bid me wait to see his face. Yea, until the breaking of the day will I wait. Until the sunset of my life will I wait. Yea, even until the Resurrection of the dead will I wait to see his face!"

She crossed the garden and back, paused, and raised her face to the vault above where the moon was casting floods of silver over the billowing clouds. She sighed and the words she spoke were breathed out softly as if they too were a part of the passing night. "The hours move on and naught

there is but silence! What a silence it is! Like a pall hangeth it over the Judean hills! Like a shroud falleth it over Olivet! Like grave wrappings huggeth it the valley! God! The silence of this night! Hath there been before such silence? It doth make of itself feet that tread upon my soul and, treading, leave wounds with living tongues which call in agony, 'I am waiting! I am waiting in the garden!' No sound cometh to break this that oppresseth? The silence deepens and its mystery doth affright my soul!"

For a moment she stood under the flood-light from above like a white veiled statue, yet softer than marble, locked in the pervading and low brooding hush. Then, suddenly, she turned her ear in the direction of the highway. "A sound breaketh the stillness!" she exclaimed in an excited undertone. "Faint and far it is—but a *sound!*" With light steps she ran to her watching place by the stone wall. "Yea, a sound!" and she leaned over the wall. "It groweth on the air. What cometh? A speck it is against the gray! It moveth! It groweth larger! Aye, it cometh! It cometh! It taketh on the shape of flying garments—yea, flying garments! What meaneth this? He cometh as if pursued! Aye, if danger threaten, may Israel's God lend speed to his feet!"

The first faint sounds had rapidly grown more distinct. Mary leaned as far across the wall as

safety permitted and peered into the roadway. "What is it I see? There are two running as doth the hind run to escape the pursuing dogs! On, on they come! Close—they draw nigh! They are here! They pass!" With the last words she dropped from the wall just as the runners dashed by.

"Ho! Stop!" cried one of them. "This is the place."

"The home of Lazarus?" the other panted.

"Yea! Hast thou voice left to shout?"

"Yea, while thou dost beat the door!"

Before Mary could reach the house she heard the runners pounding on the door and shouting, "Open! Open!" and when she entered at the back her brother was unbarring the front door. "What news?" he demanded as the two rushed in.

"Be not loud of mouth. We bear news of Jesus," one of them answered.

Lazarus cast his eyes over them. One was a Galilean fisherman, the other was naked save a fragment of garment about his loins. "Who art thou, and what is thy message?"

"Disciples of Jesus are we both. Lo, was my coat torn from me in resisting those who took him and I fled leaving it in the hands of a soldier."

"Who hath taken Jesus?" It was Mary who asked, and her voice was charged with apprehension.

"Yea, who hath taken Jesus?" Joseph asked as he appeared hastily fastening his vestment.

"By the midnight Temple guard and soldiers from the Tower of Antonio hath he been taken!"

"Lazarus—Joseph!" Mary cried. "Let us hasten to him—let us *fly* to him!"

"Soldiers have taken him who is to be King of the Jews?" Martha exclaimed. "Not so!"

"Peace, women," Joseph said, lifting his hands. "Wisdom demandeth there be no loss of time. Let the stranger make speech."

"The Passover feast we ate in an upper chamber," he said. "Before the singing of the last hymn and the washing of hands Judas left, and it doth seem that from his word or act, the Master did suspect him of disloyalty. Soon we went into the streets which lay quiet save for the sound of singing from those who tarried late at the feast. Leaving the city by a side gate we followed a dim path to an old stone mill hard by an olive orchard. A secluded and hidden place it is. At the entrance to the grove the Master bade us tarry, save three, and watch with all our eyes, for threats had been breathed against him. And the three which went with him did he also bid watch while he went yet farther under the trees to commune with Jehovah as oft he doeth. Secure would he have been had not our eyes been heavy with sleep for then would we have seen the crowd approaching that with clubs and torches and spears, wormed its way across Kedron and up the hillside. And had we seen, then

would we have passed word to the inner watchers, and to the Master would they have called. Then, lo! him whom Judas would betray, could have escaped far down the hillside, and have safely hidden in some cave or tomb. So hath he escaped aforetimes. But *woe! Woe!* Woe unto him whose words thou hearest! The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak and around the old stone mill did we fall asleep. And, alas for the misery that hath come upon us; those of the inner watch did also fall asleep, and while we slept came the soldiers of Rome, the Temple guards and the rabble. Scarce had we opened our eyes when they were upon us, yet did not the inner watch awaken until Jesus, hearing the uproar, came from the shadows and said, as he stood above the sleeping forms of his disciples, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' And as he did stand, Judas hurried to him, kissing his cheek and crying, 'Hail, Master!' At this the soldiers fell upon him, yet fear did not move him, and at his command they fell back. Without the twitching of a hair or the shadow of a fear he stood out before them while he said, 'Why have ye come out against me as a robber? Daily have I taught in the Temple. Why take me not there?' And because they could make no answer they smote him on the mouth."

"Those he loved slept while his life was in peril! Those he trusted have betrayed him? Those to

whom he hath done no evil have smitten him? It can not be so! Say it is not so!" and Mary's voice broke in sobs.

"Smite the Master," angrily exclaimed Martha. "Him to be King of the Jews?"

"Yea, they did smite him," the fisherman answered. "They did curse him and as they turned away they spat upon him. Some of his disciples bore arms and in the struggle the servant of the High Priest lost an ear. Would God it had been the High Priest's head the sword severed! And as they rudely pushed him on, he whispered a word in the ear of a disciple asking that swift news of his arrest be brought to Lazarus of Bethany. Then took they him."

"Where have they taken him?" Joseph asked.

"To Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin; to the Judgment Hall of Pilate; to the scourger and the cross if they have power."

"To the Roman judgment seat—to the scourgers—to the cross—the cruel, cruel cross? Nay, not the *cross!* Save him! Lazarus—Joseph—Strangers—Men of Israel, save him whom we love! Let not the hand of Rome hang his body on a cross!" Mary plead hysterically.

"Calm thyself, Mary," Joseph said. "The Jew hath not power to take the life of Jesus, and Pilate doth hate the Sanhedrin with such fierce hatred that for nothing short of Temple gold or fear of

Cæsar would he sign a death-warrant that would please a Jew."

"Trust not to Pilate," plead the fisherman. "Pilate is but Rome in Palestine and doth not Rome love the cross? Aye, in our own Galilee were not two thousand of our sons and fathers crucified, and left for dogs to gnaw because they followed the Gaulonite and refused Rome the tax? The cross is fearful and bloody. Jesus of Nazareth must be saved from the cross!"

"Yea, by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must he be saved!" Lazarus shouted. "Let us away and arouse the hills and awake the valleys where thousands of armed Galileans are sleeping. Other thousands there are of Zealots whose hands are ever near a blade. And will not the Nationalists strike for the honor of the nation? And the Essenes? Aye, all these will we waken, and more, and by morning when the city gates swing open such a populace will enter as proclaimed him King. The time hath come for Israel to strike—aye, to strike with the sword!"

"A mob is not an army, Lazarus. Though the populace shout hosannahs or breathe curses it is all one to the sword of Rome."

"Aye, Joseph, but the wrath of Israel will make of scythes and reaping hooks, blades to strike off the shackles of Rome, and from the fastness of Judean mountains will those who know not fear,

engage Rome in such warfare as she hath never known."

"The love of thy heart doth upset thy reason," Joseph answered, shaking his head. "What to Rome is the fastness of Judean hills? Hath not Rome crossed mountains and jungles and deserts in search of her prey? Like sheep in a pen wouldst thou be made to stay in thy hiding-places until thy bleached bones would tell that Rome findeth starvation oft cheaper than the sword. From Dan to Beersheba doth the heathen purple fly over tower and wall, and under the dark shadow of her mighty eagle do the nations of the earth cower. Whence then could come thy succor? To lift the sword is but to bring it down on thine own neck. If he whom our hearts love escape, by the wit of man's mind must the thing be accomplished. Go thou, Lazarus, with these disciples and rouse the sleeping people that they be ready to swarm the city at the opening of the gates. And I—I will hasten to Jerusalem and until daybreak keep my eye where the Sanhedrin might hold meeting."

"It is not lawful for the Great Sanhedrin to meet until the sun is well risen," said Lazarus eagerly.

"And what care murderers for the law of Moses when the fires of hatred gnaw their souls? To their meeting place I will hasten, and if quietly they seek to do evil before the break of day, I will, with inno-

cent words, seek an entanglement among them concerning the Law. And with the daybreak will come the followers of Jesus and safety for another day. Haste! Let us haste!"

CHAPTER XXX

CLAUDIA'S DREAM

AFTER Pilate had left for the Judgment Hall and the soldiers and servants had returned to their accustomed places, Claudia walked the length of the room and back several times speaking to herself as she did so. "Before the tribunal of the Jew hath the greatest one of them all been judged guilty of sedition against their Law. Aye, but the gods be thanked those cunning workers of darkness have not power to take his life. And Pilate—ah, have I not Pilate's promise that of the Jew will he judge the Jew? Glad I am that Pilate is to hear his voice and look upon his face. One glance from those eyes—one word from those lips and Pilate will know that all evil accusation be accusation only."

Then Claudia threw herself across the bed, but sleep did not come, so after a time she arose, threw open the window and stood looking into the indigo sky, spangled with stars, that hung over Jerusalem. From the street beneath, the near call of a trumpet sounded which seemed to be echoed by farther and

fainter trumpet-calls, each telling the hour of the passing night. When she lay down again she slept. Through the window at the side of the bed the rich blue of the sky faded into gray and as this was shot across with a thin streak of rosy pink the cry *"Staurosate! Staurosate!"* came across the stillness of the yet unawakened morning.

With a start Claudia sprang up crying—"Whence cometh that cry, thin like the howl of a lone wolf, and sharp like its fangs: 'Crucify him! Crucify him?' Like the cry of a beast calling the pack, it soundeth. Pilate!" She pressed her hands to her head and looked toward Pilate's empty couch.

"Ah—it cometh to me! At the third watch was Pilate called to the Prætorium and hath not returned. A dream it hath been! Aye! It doth come to me!" She drew back a pace and an expression of horror marked her face as she cried, "It doth come to me! I see troops—swords—trembling of the earth—thunder answered by earthquake—black clouds, like great bats of death settling low—the rush of fire, like a cataclysm—and then darkness! And then—and *then*—what see I?"

Claudia shaded her eyes with her hands and peered into the darkness of the dream, the horror on her face deepening, and her breath coming swift and hard. "What see I? In the darkness—the thick impenetrable darkness dead to all light, I see

the hands of Pilate—*and they drip with blood!* And over against those crimson hands I see the pale face of the Jew. Ye gods! It is a warning!"

For a moment she stood dazed with terror. Then she shouted to her maids, "Margara! Zenobe! Hasten! Summon my eunuch. I must have speech with Pilate!"

When the eunuch appeared, Claudia cried: "Ah, my scarred eunuch! Warning hath been given me in a dream that all is not well at the Judgment Hall. Ah, a dream—such a dream—a dream in which earth and air and sky and water war and are not satisfied! A dream of fire and death and open graves and darkness—and Pilate and the Jew," and Claudia shivered and wrung her hands.

"If thou wouldst calm thyself, most noble mistress, and make known thy great fear, thy servant might bring thee help," the eunuch said.

"Aye, my eunuch. Ere the midnight trumpet sounded was Pilate awakened by request for soldiers from Antonio to arrest one seditious. Again before dawn summoned they him to judge the Jew. And, oh, my eunuch—my eunuch—that Jew is him whom thy soul loveth—him whose disciple thou art to be!"

"Jesus of Nazareth?" the eunuch cried sharply.

"Yea, yea—the Jew!"

The eunuch raised his face toward heaven and lifting high his hands said in the voice of one implor-

ing, "God of the Jew, God of the Jew, hear and deliver him from the hand of Rome."

"Hear thou the dream," said Claudia, stepping close to him. "At the turning of the dawn came it to me. The shout of battle! The screams of those pierced by spears! The groans of those trodden under the hoofs of mad chargers! The curses of those tortured! And above the din did I hear children's voices calling, 'Help—help!' and the voices of women calling, 'Help! Help! In God's name, help!' and the voices of men shouting, 'Help! Help! Cometh no help!' And no help came save the Angel of Desolation with sweeping black wings! And, oh, my eunuch! Out of the darkness and the desolation, I saw the hands of Pilate rising scarlet with wet blood and over against them the pale face of the Jew!"

Before she had finished speaking with the eunuch, Claudia's cries for help had drawn the household, and soldiers and servants crowded into the room and filled the passageway as she brought fear and trembling to them by her dramatic recital of her tragic dream.

"It is a dream—a dream! But in that dream, between my vision and the darkness, passeth a purple robe, a crown of thorns, a lonely cross on a far hillside, a white face drawn in agony and parched lips moving as to moan! Then again the tumult and the carnage! Ah, see! Canst thou not see? There

are soldiers upon the city walls! There are balls of fire flying in the gloom! There are stones crashing through the air—yea, even the marble of the Temple of the Jews! Canst thou not see? Aye—look! The Temple falleth! It is scattered until not one stone is left upon another! And ever above the thunder-din cometh the cry, 'Help! Help!' Famine do I see until mothers eat the tender flesh that hugs their bosoms! And pestilence do I see until death hath devoured all life! The Roman plow is driven over the Holy Place of the Jew and scavengers of the desert revel in naked tombs! And here from this place of abominations arise the hands of Pilate! Crimson like dye they are. And there gathers from the gray and awful stillness, the pale face of the Jew! Again—and yet again I see them!"

When Claudia had reached this part of her vision she screamed and covered her eyes, and the soldiers and servants who had crowded about, drew back in terror, their gaze transfixed.

Suddenly she cried, throwing her hands out to the eunuch: "I must have speech with Pilate. Fly thou to the Judgment Seat! Let no door stop thee! Let no guard stay thy feet! And when thou hast gained the ear of Pilate, tell into it, 'Thus sayeth thy wife—have nothing to do with this just man for I have this day suffered many things in a dream because of him!' Thus shall it be that Claudia shall

raise her voice to save the hands of Pontius Pilate from the livid stain of innocent blood and the pale face of the Jew from forever haunting the centuries."

CHAPTER XXXI

KING OF THE JEWS

"JOVE, but my eyes are tired! Since the third watch hath my service been required, yet am I feverish to see the end of this matter. Look! Yonder housetops are black with men, eager-eyed, and the streets are swarmed with early risers running hither and thither like ants much stirred up. When did ever the morning sun shine on such a scene?"

"Where is he now, this enemy of our Tiberius that hath thus stirred up the populace?"

"To the barracks of the Tower of Antonio they have taken him for the *flagellum horrible.*"

"And will they be long in laying open the flesh of his back?"

"Nay, for twelve brawny armed and deaf to the cries of pity will lay on the scourge. Soon will he be brought again before Pilate." The speaker was a scribe in the palace of Herod the Great. With two Romans visiting in Jerusalem, he stood on the steps of the Prætorium looking out over the open court which united its two colossal wings.

"Didst thou see the mighty procession which heralded the new King?" asked one of the visitors.

"Yea, by the gods it was a great outpouring! Peoples from all nations of the earth were there to bear back the news that one had arisen to take the throne of Cæsar. And well hath the time been chosen for revolt when the city is gorged with strangers, and the flower of Rome's legions in Palestine, is called to Syria. Of him who betrayed the Galilean revolutionist and hatched the plot for his deliverance, Rome should make a divinity."

"A betrayer was there?"

"Yea, a betrayer and a plot else those pious dogs of the Sanhedrin had not yet laid hands on him who stirred the people, for by day his followers, who were many, kept near him, and by night hath he cunningly concealed himself. Cowards and curs are these Jews whose faces are solemn and whose prayers are long. Rome shows her hand in the open. But these move under dark cloaks of piety, spin webs and heap up much spoil."

"Hast thou seen this stirrer up of strife?"

"Yea, and heard his speech. Daily he taught in the Temple and though he is called a Galilean peasant, he hath much knowledge. A strange people were those of his race, and strange were the kings that once sat on their thrones, for out of the Galilean's mouth their law allowed no usury, left fruit on the vine for the poor, and turned vast estates

back to be redistributed. Aye, this stirrer up of sedition makes much of the poor. Perchance hunger hath gnawed at his own vitals. By traffic in 'traditions' and sacrifices have their priests grown rich filching from the poor. For this did the Galilean call them a den of thieves and curse and beat them, and for this gained he their hatred. Yet they did not dare lay hands on him openly for fear of the populace. Yesternight his hiding-place was learned. At midnight as his followers lay sleeping on the hills outside the city, a body of armed men with the midnight guard of the Temple, crossed Kedron and found the revolter at an old olive farm. Then was he brought before the Sanhedrin—sly foxes, evil beasts—for by their own law it is not lawful to hold council until sunrise. But fearing lest his followers should rescue him if daylight found him uncondemned, even at the cock crowing was he led before Caiaphas. Then was he led before Pilate. By Pilate was he sent to Herod. A raw joke, this that Pilate did poke at Herod in the face of much people."

"Doth Pilate not love the Tetrarch of Galilee?"

"Nay, and yet more than Herod doth love him. The father of Herod, he who was called the Great, was crowned a king by the Senate at Rome. Yet did Pilate fall heir to the glory thereof and the hurt hath worked on Herod like a running sore. Yet must his lips be ever sealed. Now hath Pilate sent

one accused to this man, knowing that he hath no power of life and death under the Roman law in Jerusalem. But if he had, yet would the joke be a raw one, for is not the following of the Galilean from the province of Herod? With what wisdom could he lift his arm against the chosen one of so great and zealous a following? So Herod did send the accused back to Pilate and while the man passed back and forth, the mob gathered and those pious murderers from the Temple, like worms of corruption, worked in and out among the mob whispering, 'Traitor! Traitor! Treason! Revolt!' throwing into the face of Pilate that he is no friend of Cæsar if this one be not crucified. Then gave Pilate the rebel to the flayers. Next comes the cross."

"So shall ever perish those who espouse the cause of the poor. None but a fool dreams crowns come to the poor. What reason hath this man who would be king, for befriending the poor? Hath he a reason?"

"Aye. He teacheth of that which he doth call 'Liberty.' By his way there would be no more slave, but all masters."

"Strange—passing strange! How then if there is no *articulata implementa* could there be Roman property? And who would pay for the circus?"

"I know not. But the arm of Cæsar will see that no chance is given this wild teaching of liberty. Not since Sparticus lifted the sword to get freedom

for his kind has the head of our Cæsar rested on an easy pillow. Revolt and insurrection rumble in the hearts of the slave and the poor rabble, as still fire smolders in the heart of Vesuvius. Like a brand in a dry corn field will this revolt grow into insurrection unless it is put down. The arm of Rome is sufficient—but see! The mob parts! They are coming from the scourge with him who is to be crucified. The death warrant hath been already written."

"Dost write death warrants for all crucified ones?"

"Nay, no more than for flies or vermin, else the earth would be running over with warrants. But a stirrer up of sedition, this is the one crime that Rome doth not forgive. Look! Yonder he comes! Lo, he weareth a gaudy robe. His face is pale from loss of blood. Look you! It drips from under the gaudy robe and follows his feet in plotches which stain the mosaic. The thongs must have cut deep. Ha! ha! He weareth a crown—a crown for a King—a crown of prickly thorns. It hath left its mark on his forehead, and across one cheek there lieth a purple stripe!"

"Listen—they are calling *'Staurosate! Staurosate!'* Like demons do they yell as he is being led before Pilate."

"Canst see?"

"Yea. Pilate doth have him mount the steps

so that the mob may see him. Look you; what manner of man is he, who moveth like a conqueror among those shouting his praises? There is majesty in the tread of the feet that leave a trail of blood! And look! Across his breast doth he fold his arms; he lifteth his head; he looketh out over the multitude as Julius Cæsar might look upon a handful of chained slaves who had breathed against his power invincible. Why hath this Galilean this majestic presence? See thou—it doth impress the mob until their tongues stop wagging and the buzz dieth to the stillness of the dead. Look—look! The Procurator ariseth. He is full robed! And about to speak!"

Pontius Pilate moved himself so that the hungry mob, awed for the moment into silence by the sight of one condemned, might look upon the voice of power back of the Judgment Hall and Tower of Antonio. When every eye had turned from the royal-robed figure looking out on the mob with god-like calm, Pilate himself turned his eyes from the solitary man to the multitude and after prolonging the silence a moment said, *"Ecce homo!"*

For the spell of a few short breaths, as if something heavy hung over the heads of the gaping crowd, the silence lasted. Then from a dozen sources, like the fierce yelping of the pack came the cry, *'Staurosate!* Crucify him!"

"Hear! Hear!" exclaimed the scribe to his visi-

tor, "those curs of long prayers and dangling frontlet do much loyal shouting for Cæsar whom in their hearts they curse. Neither for Cæsar care they, neither for their Temple, but for the favor of Cæsar and the gold of the Temple will they swear lies and lick the hand of power. But let me turn aside for a brief spell to deliver up the superscription that Pilate hath commanded be fastened on the cross above the thorn-cut brow of him who would be king. Look you—read: *'Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judaeorum.'*" The scribe and his visitors laughed heartily. "And lest among the multitude that hath heard of a new king, there are those unfamiliar with our own tongue, Pilate hath given command that the superscription be written in Greek and in the ancient letters of the Jews' own Law. Also I would put the seal on the death sentence. Wouldst thou see this too?"

"Yea, for not before hath it been given my eyes to read the death sentence of a 'King.'"

The scribe spread a fresh parchment* on the

*The original of what is accepted as Pilate's sentence was discovered about the year 1380 in an iron tube among the marble ruins of a temple in the city of Aquila, Italy, written in Hebrew characters on parchment. It is now in the custody of the Keeper of the Royal and General Archives of Simancus, Spain. The following is the translation from the original parchment:

In the year 17 of Tiberius Cæsar, Emperor of Rome and of all the world, unconquerable monarch: In the CXXI Olympiad; in the XXIV Illiad and of the creation of the world according to the number and count of the Hebrews, four times 1157; of the propagation of the Roman Empire,

table and the Romans bent over it to read. "Yet a moment!" the scribe called to the men at the table.

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the year 73; of the deliverance from slavery to Babylon the year 430; and the restitution of the Holy Empire, the year 497. Lucius Marius Sauricus being Consuls of Rome and Pontiff, Proconsuls of the unconquerable Tiberius; Public Governor of Judea, Regent and Governor of the City of Jerusalem, Flavius IV; its graceful president Pontius Pilate; Regent of Lower Galilee, Herod Antipas; Pontiff of the High Priesthood—Caiaphas; Ales Maelo, Master of the Temple; Rababan Ambe, Centurion of the Consuls and of the City of Jerusalem. Quintas Cornelius Sublimius and Setus Pompilius Rufus, on the 25th, I Pontius Pilate, representative of the Roman Empire, in the Palace of Larchi, our residence, judge, condemn and sentence to death, Jesus, called Christ, the Nazarene, of the multitude of Galilee, a man seditious of the Mosaic Law, against the Great Emperor Tiberius Cæsar, I determine and pronounce by reason of the explained, that he shall suffer death nailed to the cross, according to the usage of criminals, because having congregated many men, rich and poor, he hath not ceased to stir up tumults throughout Galilee, pretending to be the Son of God, and King of Israel, threatening the ruin of Jerusalem and the Holy Empire, and denying the tribute to Cæsar; having the boldness to enter with palms of triumph and accompanied by a multitude as King within the City of Jerusalem in the Sacred Temple.

I therefore command my Centurion, Quintas Cornelius, that he conduct publicly through the City of Jerusalem this Jesus Christ and that he be tied and flogged, dressed in purple and crowned with prickly thorns, with his own cross on his shoulders, so that he may serve as an example to malefactors; and to take with him two homicidal thieves; all of whom shall leave by the Giarancola Gate, designed to-day Antonia, and will proceed to the mount of the wicked, called Calvary, where crucified and dead, the body shall remain on the cross so that it may be a spectacle and example to all criminals, and on said cross there shall be the inscription in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, in Hebrew Jesu Aloi Alisidin'; in Greek 'Ιησοὺς Ναζαρηνὸς Βασιλεύς ιων 'Ιουόαιων'; in Latin 'Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum.' We likewise command that no one of whatever class he may be, shall attempt imprudently to impede this justice by us commanded, administered and followed with all rigor, according to the decrees and laws of the Roman and Hebrews, under penalty which those incur who rebel against the Empire."

"Something strange is happening—look! Pilate is washing his hands in a basin! What hath so defiled them that ablution doth take place in the eyes of the shouting mob?"

"A mystery—yea. But look you—aye, look you! To mystery is added yet more mystery! Herod the Tetrarch doth approach Pilate. He smileth until the rising light doth sparkle on his teeth. He holdeth forth his hand! Will the Procurator whose hands are yet wet from their strange cleansing give him greeting? Look you! Steady thine eyes for a rare sight. He doth not hesitate! Now is the hand of Pontius Pilate gripped together with that of Herod Antipas. By Castor and Pollux—by Jove himself a rare fellowship hath been born of this tempest. What next?" and laughing, the Romans turned back to the death sentence.

CHAPTER XXXII

BY THIS SIGN

AT THE side of a roadway leading up the sloping ascent of a bald hill, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, stood a rock, which by the stone rolled against it, was evidently a tomb of ancient days. This roadway, which had been tramped into fine dust by the tread of many feet, ran along the edge of a ravine, the far side of which was cut with sepulchres and fissured into narrow caves. Just beyond the tomb, the road turned to the top of the hill which was hidden by a solitary dying olive that cast its black branches across a pile of bleached gray rock. On this bald hill three crosses had been set up and since sunrise a vast crowd had thronged the roadway, for it had early become news that he who had been acclaimed King of the Jews had been hanged between two thieves, and many there were who were curious to see the sad plight of the King.

As the mocking crowd surged about the hill-top, and the sun was shining high in the heavens, the victim on the center cross uttered a cry which

seemed to vibrate into the very element and turn the light of midday into impenetrable darkness and shake the earth with a mighty trembling. Rocks rattled down the ravine; tomb-doors were shaken from their holdings; the moaning of wind, like a dying breath, passed the length of the valley below and from the black depths a leper cried, "Unclean! Unclean!" his despairing wail answered by the scream of a maniac.

In the midst of the darkness there were fitful outbursts of dull green light, like the expiring effort of a perishing sun, and in these ghostly gleams people could be seen running to and fro. Among them were a woman and a man; the woman wrapped in a long cloak, the man, mighty in size, with scarce enough garments to cover his body, but to these the woman clung as they crept behind the wayside rock for shelter. Scarcely had they settled close to the rock than it began to tremble, and then the stone rolled away from before it and a skeleton toppled out, falling at the very feet of the woman.

With a scream she cried, "My dream! My dream! Even now it cometh to pass! Help! Help!"

The man drew the woman away from the skeleton and closer to the trembling rock.

"Even the dead come forth!" she wailed. "It is the end of all things! By the death of us all shall the gods avenge the death of the Jew! Oh, my

eunuch, save me! Thou art strong! Thou wert a follower and a believer. Save me!" and she threw herself into his arms.

"Calm thyself, most noble Claudia," the man said in quiet tones. "That which maketh the earth tremble until stones roll from the grave, is naught but the same power that piles still water into waves of rocking mountains and that breaks the cedars of the hills as if they were dead grass. Fear not."

"Thou sayest—but feel the rocking of the earth."

"Yea, it doth tremble. Yet hath it trembled before and will tremble again. In Thrace have I seen the earth shake open in yawning pits."

"But the sun is dark at midday! What meaneth it?"

"Something hath come between the sun and thy vision. The sun yet shineth."

"Nay! Nay! Even the sun doth darken its face in shame that the Jew, that just man, should be hung upon a cross to die! Oh, Pilate! Pilate! How could you?"

While they were speaking the darkness lightened and two soldiers crossed the road. When they reached the skeleton whose white outlines could be dimly seen in the gray light, they stopped suddenly.

"The dead come forth! Wherefore?" exclaimed one.

"Because this thing came of a race that knowest

nothing, not even that it is dead." He kicked the skull which separated itself from the body and rolled toward him. Stopping it with his boot he said, "Aye, good Jew, art thou dead or alive? Speak!"

"He is lacking a tongue," and the second soldier laughed. The first ran his sword through the ribs of the skeleton and flinging it into the ravine kicked the skull after it.

In the silence that followed this clearing of the roadway, a moan was heard from the hidden hill-top. It was one of the malefactors begging for a stupefying potion to stay his torment.

"Hear," said one of the soldiers. "*He* beggeth with a good tongue."

"Yea, but the Jew that hangeth between the two refused the draught."

"He refuseth nothing now. The tongue of the 'King of the Jews' waggeth no longer in profane bragging against Cæsar. Let us see to him."

When the soldiers had turned up the hill, the woman behind the rock spoke again. "Oh, my eunuch," she said, "go thou to the cross and inquire of the Jew. They say he is dead—dead," and her voice ended in a sob.

"Be comforted, most gracious Claudia. Methinks they speak what they know not. Yet will thy servant inquire."

While the eunuch was gone a group of soldiers

came down the road bearing a purple robe. Near the rock behind which Claudia stood concealed they seated themselves, removed their helmets and dropped dice in them.

"A goodly apparel," one soldier said, holding forth the robe.

"Yea, and a crown went with it," a second said.

"Yea, and a cross followed after it," a third added.

"For Pilate is the friend of Cæsar."

"Thus ever with those Rome hath cause to fear," the first soldier observed as he shook the dice in his helmet. Then in turn the soldiers rattled their dice and spoke.

"Look thou! Look thou!"

"Aye, but look here."

"Yea, but cast thine eyes on my luck!"

"I throw well!"

"I throw better!"

"I throw best! Look! The garment is mine!"

While they had been casting lots for the robe, several bystanders had collected. Among them was a thickly built man with a peculiar mark on his face. Straight above the line of his black beard it lay across one cheek like a red and purple band ending in a black mark at the tip on his ear. He wore a handsomely embroidered turban and carried a blue cloak. When the game, which he watched with interest, was finished and the new owner of the

robe had taken possession of it, the bystander said, "How fareth the King whose robe now becometh thine?"

"When we left him but a short time since, he no longer begged for water and his head hung limp."

"Perhaps he hath but fainted," the man with the blue cloak suggested.

"Then shall the breaking of bones make sure his end."

"Knowest thou where the bone-breaker is?"

"I am he."

"And when wilt thou break the bones of his body?"

"What matter to thee when his bones are broken?"

"None save this. When the vast darkness that just now is lifting, was blackest, I heard a company of his followers whispering, and they did say he swore that, though dead, yet on the third day would he rise from the grave."

"And thou wouldst know of a surety that his legs are broken so that if he be stolen from the tomb his legs carry him not far?" and the soldiers laughed. "Fret not, the bones of the Jew will soon be broken."

"Wouldst thou break them sooner for a piece of gold?" and he drew from his cloak a wallet.

The soldier sprang up eagerly and held out his hand saying, "A coin upon the palm doth grant thy

desire before thine eyes. The coin—then come, let us to the bone-breaking."

The man with the wallet had his hand on the gold, and the man with the heavy sword had his hand well held out for the gift, when a woman appeared suddenly before them and said to the soldier, "Lift not thy hand against the bones of the Jew!"

"What meanest thou—follower of the Jew?" the soldier replied angrily.

"Nay, not a follower of the Jew am I. Yet I know he was a just man."

"Thou dost lie with clumsy tongue," the soldier declared. "Thou art one of his followers."

"Whether I lie, or whether I lie not, break not a bone of the Jew's body!"

"Thou art a cunning follower of the Jew, and bold. Yet shall his bones be broken. Move thou on farther from the cross. Stand to one side," and he lifted his broad sword.

"And when did it come to pass," she said without moving, "that a dog of a soldier lifted the sword against a Roman?"

"A Roman? In my eye, a Roman," and the soldier laughed.

"Yea, a Roman—and more than a Roman. Let thine eyes look!" With the words Claudia threw back the long cloak and stood forth in the gorgeous apparel of a Roman noblewoman. The soldiers

moved back a step and looked in wonderment as she spoke again. "A Roman? More than a Roman is Claudia Procula, wife of Pontius Pilate! Knowest thou, bone-breakers of the Tower of Antonio, who *Pilate* is? Not a follower of the Jew am I, but by the ring upon my hand I am the wife of the Roman Procurator, and I say to thee, not a bone of this just man's body shall be broken, else with thy broken body wilt thou pay bone for bone!"

The soldiers moved back a few steps farther. Then one said, "And when hath it come to pass that Pilate's wife giveth orders?"

"When Pilate washeth his hands of the tragedy, then doth Claudia command."

"Thou dost talk strangely for a Roman."

"This is a time of strange things. Strange darkness—strange trembling of the earth—strange bravery of a just man. Yea, a time of strange happenings. But break thou not the bones of the Jew."

The bystander with blue cloak and open wallet had moved aside a short distance. To him Claudia now turned, and after a moment of scrutiny she said, "By thy nose made fast against thy head and the twist of thy tongue when it doth barter where gold is passed, thou art a Jew. A Jew—and *such* a Jew! For the hardness of thy heart may the dark and ugly stripe thou wearest stay with thee ever. Even as thou standest before me in the dust, my

eyes behold thee shrink into a viper! Get thee hence!"

When the soldiers and the Jewish bystander had gone down the roadway toward the city, Claudia stepped back behind the rock. During the time she had been talking the dim light had given way again to the brightness of the day. From her place she watched the passers-by and harkened their comment. Some, mocking, said, "He saved others, himself he could not save." Some marveled that his last breath should be a prayer of forgiveness for those who had robbed him of his life; some declared the show were not worth the dusty pilgrimage from Jerusalem on a hot day; some laughed to find a King in so sad a plight. Some wept. One such a woman in black who came slowly, leaning on the arm of a young man, and sobbing: "He is dead! He is dead!" And when the young man sought to comfort her as a son would comfort a mother, her moaning heart cried only, "He is dead! My son—my little Jehu—he is dead!" And the suffering of the woman moved the heart of Claudia until tears wet her face.

Gradually the number of passers-by grew less and by the conversation of the stragglers Claudia knew that the body had been taken from the cross. After what seemed hours of waiting, the eunuch returned to her.

"Long hast thou been gone!" she said.

"Yea, most noble Claudia, for it hath been given

thy scarred servant to take in his strong arm the body of the Galilean from his cross. Holy service!"

"And he is dead—dead—" and Claudia's voice broke under its burden of pain.

"Weep not! Weep not!" said the scarred eunuch. "Thy falling tears drop heavily on thy servant's heart. Weep not."

"Thy kind heart hath never been the heart of a bond-slave," Claudia sobbed. "But he is dead—he is *dead!*"

"Dead? Yea—and nay, for of his promise cometh the glorious hope that turneth the waters of bitterness into the oil of joy and sobs into singing."

"What promise is this?"

"On the third day he shall rise from the dead and come forth from the grave."

"Rise from the dead! Come forth from the grave!" and Claudia lifted her eyes in astonishment.

"Yea, most noble Claudia—alive forever more. When he hath so often said, 'I and the Father are One,' he hath meant in power over life and death, for hath he not said of his life, 'I have power to lay it down and power to take it up again?'"

"He that is dead shall come forth to everlasting life?" Claudia repeated as if dazed.

"Thou speakest. Of his divine love for humankind hath the Nazarene laid down his life, that of the sacrifice may be knitted together the hearts of all races and kinds of men into the Brotherhood for

which he lived and died. And when he shall take up that life, then will there be victory over death and the grave forever more to all who believe. According to the faith he hath taught hath the Galilean this day achieved immortal victory. Wouldst thou see from whence the body of the Conqueror hath been taken?"

"Yea, I would see."

He led the way up the road and as they turned on to the brow of the hill, three upright crosses came boldly into view. On two of them hung human forms with drooping heads from the half opened mouths of which a tongue point protruded. Their hand palms were filled with clotted blood and their legs, freshly mangled by the bone-breakers, hung limp. They were too well dead now longer to attract sight-seers, and the few guards left kept tired watch at a distance. The center cross stood tall, its outstretched arms overtopping the lesser crosses. On its highest point was the superscription of Pilate. There was nothing to show it had been the death bed of a human being, other than the red stains at its center made by the scourge-cut back that had lain against it. In the full light of a western sun, this red center took on a ruddy glow.

Silent the two stood a moment. Then she said, "And thou callest him 'conqueror' whose wounded body doth even now lie in the tomb?"

"According to the mystery of the Way, he is more than conqueror."

"What is the Way, my eunuch?"

"The way of a seed of corn that passeth into the abundance of new life."

"Thy message reacheth the heart of Claudia but dimly. Hast thou not words to name this Way?"

"Yea, most noble mistress. In thine own tongue can thy servant name the Way."

"I listen."

"Via crucis."

"Via crucis," Claudia repeated. "And this meaneth?" and she lifted her eyes to the face of the man.

"That when in thy heart thou hast overcome fear and unbelief, then hast thou the victory over death and the grave. This be the Way."

"Oh, that I *might* have victory over fear and doubt and death! That I *might* enter into the faith! My scarred eunuch, thou hast led my feet thus far. Take thou my hand and lead me yet a little nearer to the cross."

Hand in hand the Roman noblewoman and the scarred eunuch moved nearer the bloodstained emblem of baptism to the Way. The man released the hand of the woman that he might hold both hands over his heart as he lifted his face to some blessed hope or vision that lay beyond sight of the woman's eyes. Yet she read on his calm and shining face that he too was a conqueror and that yet in his body he had victory over death. She turned

her eyes once again to the crimson wood just before her, lifted her hand and reverently made the sign of the cross over her heart. As she did so a peace greater than her understanding flooded her being and her breath came like that of one new born, as she whispered, *"Crux rosatus! In hoc signo vinces!"*

CHAPTER XXXIII

I AM

THIRTY-SIX hours had passed since the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, bringing the first day of a new week. Very early in the morning Mary and Martha had arisen. With Anna and Debora, Martha was going to Jerusalem, where, just outside the city gate, she was to meet Mary, the mother of James and other women who had followed their acclaimed King from his own Galilee, and were now going to his sepulchre. These women had rested over the Sabbath as the Law required, and had prepared spices and sweet ointment with which to anoint the body so hastily put away on the evening the third day before.

Mary had chosen to remain in her garden that she might be alone, and in the dawning of the morning, she walked slowly. Her heart had been wrung by pain; her tears had been spent. The will to grieve had left her and the calm of resignation had settled where the storm had torn her soul. As she walked in white the surrounding gray gave her

the appearance of an ethereal being, dim and unreal, walking in a garden of shadows, quiet as a sleeping child, and perfumed with dewy lilies.

Beside the lily bed she paused where she had once stood on a glad day with her beloved Master. She did not break a stem. She did not even stoop over the blossoms. She did not sigh. She did not for the moment seem conscious of her own existence. As she stood she felt her heart grow warm with a warmth as penetrating as sunshine and as vital as life itself, a strange unfathomable warmth that seemed to flood her being and yet be at one with it. Strangely moved by this pulsing warmth, she turned in the pathway, and as she turned, the hush of the sleeping garden was stirred by a vibrant voice which spoke the one word, "Mary!" With wildly beating heart she paused. The voice seemed to have come from under the olive tree where the old stone bench stood empty and wrapped in gloom. When she had strained her vision for a moment she saw a form in the shadows, at first misty and gray as the morning, but taking distinct shape before her bewildered eyes until a face looked toward her with unutterable love.

"Mary." Again her name sounded on the stillness like a holy call. "It is I, be not afraid."

She knew now, and in a voice of ecstasy she replied, as with flying feet she ran to him, "Master —oh, my Master!"

"Touch me not," he said when she would have thrown her arms about him. "Thy hands are not yet ready. Yet because thou hast eyes to see, thou seest. Blessed art thou among women! The things that I have taught thee, forget not, nor add to. I am the Beginning and the End. I have the keys of Death and the Unseen and lo, I am with thee *always*, even unto the end of the Ages."

And when Jesus had seen the face of Mary illumined with the immortal joy of the mystery of Deathless Love revealed, he passed again into the Unseen.

THE END

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